Direction for the Future

Prince Edward Island
CANADA

Report of the Signage Policy Review Committee

October 2001

102-04733/

Hon. Greg Deighan
Minister of Tourism
PO Box 2000
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
C1A 7N8

Dear Minister Deighan,

The Committee is pleased to submit the report of the Signage Policy Review Committee to you, pursuant to Executive Council D2000-504 of November 22, 2000.

Over the past nine months, the Committee has examined the current signage programs, reviewed relevant legislation, studied practices in other jurisdictions and gathered input from Islanders and visitors. Based on the Committee's findings, the report contains forty-three recommendations which are intended to represent a new signage system for the Province. Some of these recommendations are intended to be implemented immediately; others, the Committee recognizes will take time.

Respectfully submitted by:

Larry Wright, Chair

Don Cudmore, Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island

John Dewey, Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities

Ron MacNeill, Department of Tourism

Wilbur Naddy

Anne Olson, Association of Tourism Operators

Kent Smith, Department of Transportation and Public Works

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Executive Summary

The Signage Policy Review Committee was appointed by the Minister of Tourism to review the existing signage system and to make recommendations as to how it could be improved while retaining the best features of the present program.

The terms of reference directed the committee to address the following questions:

- *Is the current provincial signage policy still effective? If not, what changes should be introduced?*
- *What is the proper balance between commercial advertising and protection of the Island's landscape?*
- *What role should municipalities have in regulating signage?*
- *Are there changes to Highway Information Signage System (HISS) signage in terms of size, colour, location and symbols that would make it more effective?*
- *Is there a more effective way of administering the provincial signage program? How should the cost of signage be allocated?*
- *Are there any other issues that the committee deems relevant to an effective provincial signage policy?*

To address these questions, the committee conducted an extensive consultation process, hearing from Islanders, visitors, business operators, industry organizations and interest groups. The overwhelming commonality in the submissions was the desire to protect the Island landscape. While there was a great deal of recognition of the positive impact of the existing standards, there were many requests for changes to existing practices. In response, the committee made 43 recommendations which propose a systematic approach to providing adequate way-finding information while protecting the landscape and public safety.

The first of these recommendations reflects the committee's vision of the overall purpose and intent of a provincial signage policy.

The objective of a signage policy should be to protect the landscape, promote safety and provide an effective way-finding system.

The objective is further refined in the development of eight guiding principles. These were used throughout this exercise to guide the committee in its decision-making process. The committee believes that the following guiding principles should be adopted and, along with the objective, form the basis of a new signage policy:

- given that the unique landscape of the province is of intrinsic importance to Islanders and is a fundamental component of the province's appeal as a tourist destination, the roadways and land visible from roadways are not an appropriate place for advertising, and signage should result in no net loss of landscape quality;
- in the absence of roadside advertising, there must be an effective off-premise directional signage program which is part of a systematic approach to provide adequate way-finding information;
- the signage system must place public safety as a priority;
- the needs of the travelling public must be met;
- a level playing field for operators must be created and maintained;
- the system must require only change that is necessary and sufficient to address critical issues and meet the objective;
- the signage system must achieve an adequate balance between signage and protecting the landscape quality; and
- implementation and operation of the system must be manageable and affordable, and allow for growth.

The committee also made recommendations intended to ensure that the objective and guiding principles are met by entrenching these into legislation and that the legislation be unmistakably clear as to when and how it will be applied.

Six major components of the signage policy were explored in detail and a series of recommendations made which together are intended to create a new signage system for PEI.

Road Signs

The committee made nine recommendations which are designed to help people find their way and reduce the dependence on off-premise signs through improvement to the road sign system. The committee placed emphasis on directing travellers to communities of the province first via routes, and then to specific locations in the local area. The committee believes the key to achieving this is, and should continue to be, the route signs and guide signs.

On-premise Signs

The committee made six recommendations which are intended to provide operators with adequate opportunity for on-premise signing and to provide effective and consistent administration of the regulations through a permit system.

Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program

There are nine recommendations with respect to off-premise signs. The basis of the proposed changes is replacing the current Highway Information Signage System (HISS) program with a new system of roadside directional signs and map-stops.

Municipal Signage Bylaws

The four recommendations made in this section are intended to better position municipalities to manage signs within their communities and to ensure a level of consistency across the province.

Integrated Directional Information

The committee believes signage should not be considered the only option to provide directional information to visitors. Three recommendations were made which are intended to better coordinate visitor information in a way that supports the new signage program being proposed.

Administration and Enforcement

The committee believes that there must be uniform and competent enforcement, with one set of rules for all players, in order to ensure the integrity of the system being proposed. To achieve this, the committee made seven recommendations for implementation, administration and enforcement centred around developing new legislation, a cost-recovery fee schedule, and a phased-in implementation schedule.

The committee believes the system put forward in this report preserves the best of the existing program while addressing the critical issues. These recommendations, backed by the appropriate commitment of financial and personnel resources, are intended to meet the objective and guiding principles defined by the committee, allow for growth, and have a beneficial impact on the landscape and public safety of the Island.

The task of reaching these conclusions has been more challenging than originally anticipated. The committee acknowledges that while implementation will also be challenging and may be met with some resistance, it is in the best interest of Islanders and visitors that these changes proceed.

Sommaire

Le *Signage Policy Review Committee* (Comité d'examen de la politique sur la signalisation), formé par le ministre du Tourisme, passe en revue le système de signalisation actuel et formule des recommandations sur les améliorations à apporter tout en conservant les meilleurs éléments du programme actuel.

Le Comité doit se pencher sur les questions suivantes :

- *Est-ce que la politique provinciale actuelle sur la signalisation est encore efficace? Si la réponse est non, quels changements devraient être apportés?*
- *Quel est le juste équilibre entre la publicité commerciale et la protection du paysage de l'Île?*
- *Quel rôle devraient jouer les municipalités en ce qui a trait à la réglementation de la signalisation?*
- *Est-ce que des changements apportés, par exemple, à la taille, à la couleur, à l'emplacement et aux symboles des panneaux amélioreraient l'efficacité du* Highway Information Signage System - HISS *(Système des panneaux d'information sur les routes)?*
- *Existe-t-il une façon plus efficace d'administrer le programme provincial de signalisation? Comment les coûts reliés à la signalisation devraient-ils être répartis?*
- *Y a-t-il d'autres questions qui, selon le Comité, devraient faire partie d'une politique provinciale efficace sur la signalisation?*

Pour répondre à ces questions, le Comité a entrepris un processus de consultation exhaustif pour connaître le point de vue des résidents de l'Île, des visiteurs, des exploitants, des organisations de l'industrie et des groupes d'intérêts. Ces intervenants étaient tous d'avis que le paysage de l'Île devait être protégé. Même s'ils reconnaissaient beaucoup l'impact positif des normes existantes, un bon nombre ont demandé des changements. Par la suite, le Comité a formulé 44 recommandations qui proposent une façon méthodique d'assurer une signalisation adéquate tout en préservant le paysage et la sécurité du public.

La première de ces recommandations fait ressortir l'orientation générale d'une politique provinciale sur la signalisation.

Une politique de signalisation devrait protéger le paysage, promouvoir la sécurité et assurer un système de signalisation efficace.

Cet objectif est précisé par l'établissement de huit principes directeurs qui ont guidé le

Comité tout au long de son processus de prise de décisions. Le Comité est d'avis que les principes directeurs suivants devraient être adoptés et former, au même titre que l'objectif, la base d'une nouvelle politique sur la signalisation :

- comme le paysage unique de la province est d'une importance intrinsèque pour les résidents de l'Île et qu'il est un élément fondamental de l'attrait de la province comme une destination touristique, les routes et le paysage qui les entoure ne sont pas des endroits appropriés pour la publicité, et la signalisation ne devrait pas nuire à la beauté du paysage;
- pour remplacer la publicité le long des routes, il faudra établir un programme efficace de panneaux de direction éloignés qui assurera, de façon méthodique, une signalisation adéquate;
- le système de signalisation devra faire de la sécurité du public un élément prioritaire;
- le système devra répondre aux besoins des voyageurs;
- des règles uniformes devront être établies et maintenues pour tous les exploitants;
- le système devra exiger seulement les changements qui sont nécessaires pour traiter les questions cruciales et respecter l'objectif;
- le système de signalisation devra atteindre un juste équilibre entre la signalisation et la protection de la beauté du paysage; et
- la mise en application et le fonctionnement du système devront être gérables et abordables, de même que favoriser la croissance.

De plus, le Comité a formulé des recommandations qui permettront de réaliser l'objectif et d'appliquer les principes directeurs en les incluant dans la législation et en précisant clairement, dans cette législation, la façon de procéder et l'échéancier.

Six éléments importants de la politique sur la signalisation ont été examinés en détail et des recommandations ont été formulées en vue de créer un nouveau système de signalisation à l'Î.-P.-É.

Panneaux de signalisation

Le Comité a formulé neuf recommandations qui aideront les voyageurs à atteindre leur destination et à moins compter sur les panneaux éloignés, et ce, en améliorant le système de signalisation routière. Selon le Comité, il faut diriger les voyageurs vers les localités de la province au moyen des routes et, ensuite, vers les emplacements particuliers dans les localités. Et, pour réaliser cet objectif, il faut des panneaux routiers et des panneaux indicateurs.

Panneaux sur place

Le Comité a formulé six recommandations qui permettront aux exploitants de placer des panneaux sur place et qui assureront l'administration efficace et uniforme des règlements au moyen d'un système de permis.

Programme de panneaux de direction et d'information pour les visiteurs

Le Comité a formulé neuf recommandations concernant les panneaux éloignés. Les changements proposés visent à remplacer le système HISS actuel par un nouveau système d'arrêts-cartes et de panneaux de direction le long des routes.

Règlements municipaux sur la signalisation

Les quatre recommandations formulées dans cette section aideront les municipalités à mieux gérer les panneaux dans leurs collectivités et à assurer l'uniformité dans toute la province.

Information intégrée sur la direction

Selon le Comité, la signalisation ne devrait pas être considérée comme la seule option pour fournir aux visiteurs l'information sur la direction. Trois recommandations ont été formulées pour mieux coordonner l'information aux visiteurs de façon à appuyer le nouveau programme de signalisation qui est proposé.

Administration et application

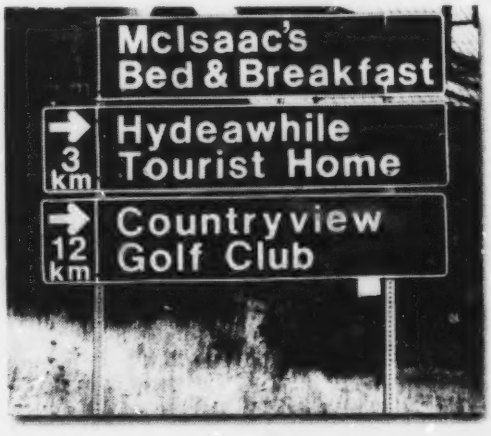
Selon le Comité, un ensemble de règles doit être appliqué uniformément pour tous les intervenants en vue d'assurer l'intégrité du système qui est proposé. Pour ce faire, le Comité a formulé sept recommandations reliées à la mise à exécution, à l'administration et à l'application d'une nouvelle législation, d'un barème des droits exigibles et d'un calendrier de mise en place graduelle.

Le Comité est d'avis que le système précisé dans ce rapport préserve les meilleurs éléments du programme existant tout en abordant les questions cruciales. Ces recommandations, appuyées par l'engagement approprié des ressources financières et humaines, permettront de réaliser l'objectif et d'appliquer les principes directeurs qui sont définis par le Comité, favoriseront la croissance et auront un impact positif sur le paysage et la sécurité du public à l'Île.

Il a été plus difficile que prévu de tirer ces conclusions. Le Comité reconnaît que, même si la mise en place du nouveau système présentera aussi un réel défi et se heurtera peut-être à une certaine résistance, les résidents de l'Île et les visiteurs profiteront beaucoup de ces changements

Introduction

Prince Edward Island has a long history of managing highway signage to direct travellers, ensure motoring safety and protect the scenic landscape which is valued by residents and visitors. The province began its role in signage control in 1936 with the introduction of *An Act Respecting Advertisements Along the Public Highway*, which has evolved into the current *Highway Advertisements Act*. Rooted in protecting the Island landscape, the legislation was complemented by the introduction of the Highway Information Signage System (HISS) as an innovative means of providing direction to tourism accommodations and attractions. HISS was intended to improve the Island's landscape by establishing an alternative to off-premise advertising. Its original premise was that there would be no advertising signage along the highway, just signs indicating where directional change was required. It has developed into a network of approximately 2,500 directional information signs serving the travelling public.



This system has received a great deal of recognition and support from Islanders and visitors. It has also been a model for other jurisdictions. However, in recent years there have been proposals from tourism operators, business people and municipalities to update the legislation and the HISS program, both of which have changed very little since their inception. New challenges are emerging as visitation levels have increased, new developments have occurred, and municipal structures and demands have changed. Other jurisdictions have followed our lead, but in some areas we have not kept up with them.

Background

An *Act Respecting Advertisements Along the Public Highway* was first introduced in 1936 and became the *Highway Advertisements Act* in 1952. During this early period, the legislation focussed on regulating the size and location of signs that could be seen from a public road.

A turning point came in 1971, when the Prince Edward Island Tourist Association and the Departments of Highways, Community Services, and Environment and Tourism designed a Tourist Communications Strategy intended to "eliminate the need for highway advertising" (Department of Environment and Tourism, 1972, p.9). The system consisted of the following:

- a co-ordinated tourist literature package;
- a network of Tourist Information Centres;
- information stops or highway pull-off areas at major signage points; and
- directional signs on the right-of-way to direct visitors to off-highway locations and establishments.

This system was co-ordinated with the marking of the three scenic drives and a special publication depicting the visitor services available along these scenic drives. The Directional and Information Signage System was subsequently divided into three phases:

- signing the three scenic drives: the Lady Slipper Drive in Prince County, the Blue Heron Drive in Queens County, and the Kings Byway Drive in Kings County;
- the installation of community name signs, which was completed in 1973; and
- replacing existing private off-premise signs with a standardized provincial system.

Also in 1971, provisions were added to the regulations for a Provincial Signage Committee which would have an advisory and appellate role.

In 1974, the third phase of the directional sign program started off as a pilot project among the province, the Prince Edward Island Tourist Association and the Southern Kings Tourist Association. With some modifications, what is known as the HISS program was introduced across the Island in 1976.

While there have been several regulatory changes over the years, such as changing size restrictions and prohibiting mobile signs, what is in place today is not significantly different from the original legislation.

A review of the system was conducted in the late 1980s as part of the Royal Commission on the Land, whose mandate included that it inquire into and report upon "the relationship between the quality of landscape and Government policy respecting roadside advertising" (Boylan, 1990, Vol. 1, p.9). The 1991 report included several recommendations intended to improve existing signing practices: reducing clutter, clarifying municipal and provincial jurisdiction, stating the goals and objectives of protecting the landscape in legislation, incorporating the HISS program into legislation, and providing a number of means for better administration and enforcement of the regulations.

Following the release of the Royal Commission report, the Province established a committee of government and industry representatives to examine the recommendations relating to signage. The committee concludes that "HISS has now become a problem as opposed to a solution" (*Report of the Signage Review Committee*, 1991, p.3). Its recommendations included limiting the HISS program to the tourism industry, using closed tabs on HISS signs, reintroducing licensing stickers for on-premise signs and licensing of special event signs.

In response to the 1991 Review Committee's report, the HISS policy was amended to discontinue issuing straight-ahead signs and signs at driveways. The *Roadside Signs Act,* intended to replace the *Highway Advertisements Act,* was passed the following year. It removed reference to a Provincial Advertisement Committee and empowered the minister to make regulations with respect to a number of issues, including HISS and appeals. It also provided municipalities with the authority to make bylaws and stated "in the event of any conflict between those bylaws and this act or regulations, the bylaws will prevail" (*Roadside Signs Act,* Stats. PEI 1992,c.62, s.5). The *Roadside Signs Act* was never proclaimed and the province continues to operate under the *Highway Advertisements Act.*

Many of the issues identified by the Royal Commission on the Land and the 1991 Review Committee have yet to be addressed. New issues have also arisen, placing increased pressure on the system.

Critical Issues

The following have been identified as the critical issues currently facing the signage system:

Landscape Protection – The current signage system was originally introduced to protect the Island landscape, and has had a positive impact by limiting the number of signs. With recent growth in tourism more effective signage management has become increasingly important. Landscape continues to be the single most important reason that Prince Edward Island has standing in the worldwide tourism marketplace.

Capacity – Concerns are being expressed regarding the increasing number of HISS signs. At the same time, limits established under the HISS policy are being stretched due to the increasing numbers of new businesses opening across the province. Waiting lists currently exist for signs at approximately 26 locations where demand exceeds space, and many more locations are currently at capacity. Some businesses are openly challenging the regulations by displaying signs clearly outside the intent of the program.

Level Playing Field – In addition to the capacity issue, a number of other factors are contributing to concerns about fairness of the program. A change in policy 10 years ago ended the practice of issuing straight-ahead HISS signs and signs at driveways, refocusing the program on the intended purpose of indicating a change in direction. Operators are now routinely denied new straight-ahead signs; however, those in place prior to the policy change have been allowed to remain. Some of these signs block locations where directional change signs are required for other businesses. In addition, some private off-premise signs have been allowed, while others have been denied.

Design and Technology – Design and material of the HISS signs have not been updated since they were first introduced. New standards now exist across the country, and new materials are available that improve legibility. The province has received many suggestions to consider such options as symbols, reflective material and standard colours. Through the use of technology, new non-signing options are also available to provide directional information.

Municipalities – Under the various and poorly integrated provisions of the *Highway Advertisements Act, Municipalities Act, Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act, City of Summerside Act* and the *Planning Act,* municipalities have taken on a range of signage controls. The content and administration of these controls vary with no standard provisions in place across the province. Municipalities and residents have expressed a desire for clarification.

Administration – Fees under the Highway Information Signage System are dependent on type and size of the operation, not the cost of providing the sign; fees collected cover less than half the cost. Discretion applied under the program has resulted in many exemptions being made.

Review Questions

In light of these critical issues, the province recognized that a review should be undertaken. The Department of Tourism, with approval from Executive Council, appointed an industry/ government committee to review the current policy, receive public input and make recommendations to address the critical issues, while striving to retain the best features of the present program. The terms of reference directed the committee to address the following questions:

- *Is the current provincial signage policy still effective? If not, what changes should be introduced?*
- *What is the proper balance between commercial advertising and protection of the Island's landscape?*
- *What role should municipalities have in regulating signage?*
- *Are there changes to HISS signage in terms of size, colour, location and symbols that would make it more effective?*
- *Is there a more effective way of administering the provincial signage program? How should the cost of signage be allocated?*
- *Are there any other issues that the committee deems relevant to an effective provincial signage policy?*

Committee Membership

The membership of the committee is as follows:

Larry Wright, a retired school principal (Chairperson);
Anne Olson, President, Association of Tourism Operators;
Don Cudmore, Executive Director, Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island;
Wilbur Naddy, a retired businessman;
John Dewey, Executive Director, Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities;
Kingsley Lewis, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs;
Kent Smith, Department of Transportation and Public Works; and
Ron MacNeill, Department of Tourism.

Rochelle Gallant, a Policy Analyst with the Executive Council Office, acted as Executive Secretary to the committee. Staff support was provided by Doug Murray, Tourism PEI; Inez Somers, Executive Council Office; and Shannon Courtney, a business intern with the Executive Council Office.

Work Plan

The following work plan was used during the review:

Work Plan

- Review Terms of Reference and Develop Work Plan (January)
- Gather and Analyze Information (December - January)
  - Legislation
  - Practices and experiences of other jurisdictions
- Initiate Public Consultations (mid-January)
  - Identify key stakeholders and interest groups
  - Call for public submissions
- Review Questions (mid-January - February)
  - Prepare concise background information on each review question
  - Review each question and discuss issues
- Consultations (February - April)
  - Sessions in Charlottetown, Summerside and Souris
  - Review written submissions as received
- Develop Objectives, Goals and Recommendations (May - June)
- Prepare for Focus Groups (July)
- Conduct Focus Groups (August)
- Finalize Recommendations (September)
- Present Report to the Minister of Tourism (October)

The committee recognizes that while there is much to learn from other jurisdictions, PEI is unique both in our landscape and history in signage control. For the most part, the Province of Prince Edward Island has already made tough decisions banning billboards and regulating size, number and location of on-premise signage. Other jurisdictions have recently reviewed or are reviewing their practices, often using PEI as a model. Their challenges are much greater in environments where a proliferation of signs already exists and where existing legislation has often not been adequately enforced. Through this review, the committee sought to develop Island solutions that recognize the progress PEI has made, address the current issues facing the Island, take into consideration what the future needs will be, and meet the needs of Islanders and visitors.

The review covered all forms of signs on public or private land that are visible from a public highway. While much of the focus was on the Highway Information Signage System, the committee quickly recognized that in order to arrive at meaningful recommendations the review must consider the complement of highway signs providing advertisement and directional information. Traffic control signs, such as speed signs or warning signs, were determined to be outside the scope of the review.

The following means were used to solicit public input for the review:

- invitations to make presentations and focus questions were sent to 141 identified stakeholders and interest groups, including municipalities, members of the sign industry, business and community groups, and tourist associations;
- advertisements were placed in local newspapers, inviting interested individuals and organizations to make submissions and presentations to the committee;
- the provincial Web site provided an opportunity for Islanders and visitors to submit their comments;
- upon request, the chair of the committee met with two organizations, spoke on the review process and invited input; and
- the chair participated in a call-in show on CBC radio on March 15, 2001.

In response, the committee:

- received 26 written submissions from individuals, municipalities and organizations;
- heard 16 presentations from individuals, municipalities and organizations, most of which also provided written submissions; and
- received 35 comments via the provincial government Web site (24 from Islanders, 11 from former Islanders and others who have visited PEI).

Consumer research was obtained using secondary sources from other jurisdictions, as well as by conducting two focus groups on the proposed changes. The focus groups were conducted by the Champion Group and held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in August. In total, there were 17 participants, all of whom were frequent travellers. The participants were adult males and females, with and without children, and had an annual household income of $35,000 or more.

Most of the participants had visited Prince Edward Island, some as recently as the previous week. The focus group was used to gather information from travellers regarding their habits, usage patterns, attitudes and preferences regarding highway signage. Specific proposals being considered by the committee were also presented to the focus group for their reaction.

The following sections outline the findings of the committee, explore critical issues and make a series of recommendations to address these issues.

Objective and Guiding Principles

The existing signage system has provided a way-finding program designed to protect the Island landscape and promote public safety. It is worthwhile to re-examine these areas and translate them into objective and guiding principles.

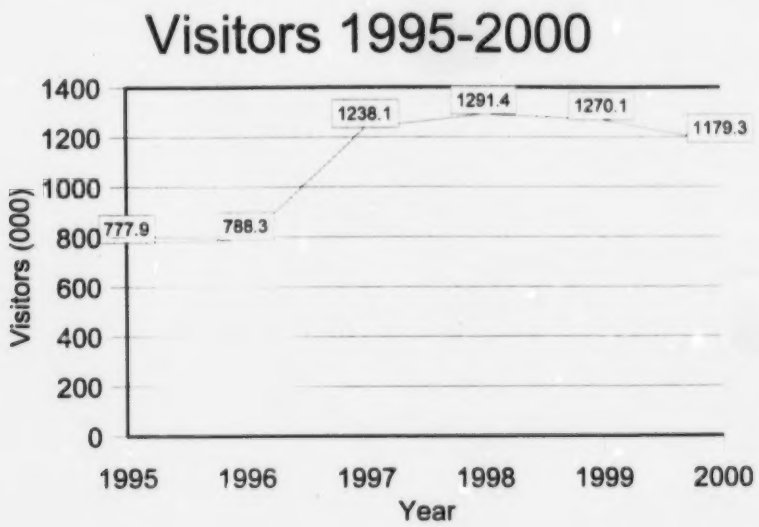
Objective

There are numerous reasons why protecting the Island landscape is important. At the top of the list are the people of PEI. The issue of landscape goes right to the heart of Islanders. Islanders feel very strongly about their landscape; it is part of their identity and culture. They are also passionate about their own properties, and the landscape as a whole, which was illustrated in-depth in many of the presentations.

Because of this, landscape protection has always been at the core of signage regulation in the province. The introduction of the HISS program began as a movement "to take positive steps towards the protection of the Island landscape from the proliferating occurrence of highway signage" (Department of Environment and Tourism, 1972, p.9). Prior to the introduction of the Highway Information Signage System, the province was clearly on a trend to increase the number of signs advertising both the location and features of facilities. The temptation to use the road network of PEI as a means of advertising was magnified by the fact that most visitors to the Island travel by car. The HISS system was an effort to deal with this issue before it reached crisis proportions, and landscape quality substantively compromised.

While there is some subjectivity to the value of the landscape, the consultation exercise revealed general agreement and, in fact, passion for signage control that protects the working landscape of the Island. The committee heard from both Islanders and visitors, who reiterated that the urban and rural landscape of the Island was to be valued and protected from a proliferation of signs. However, the committee also heard that, as a province, we are losing ground. This is of particular concern given the growing importance of landscape to the culture and economy of the province.

Without question, protecting the Island landscape is of intrinsic importance to the Island tourism industry. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the province. From May to October 2000, an estimated 1.18 million visitors came to PEI and spent $301.1 million (Department of Tourism, 2000, p.1). These numbers have risen significantly since 1995.



The value of the industry to the province is well-summarized in *The Tourism Industry of Prince Edward Island: Strategic Action Plan.*

> *There should be no doubt about the economic and social significance of the industry to the province.*
>
> *The industry:*
> - *Plays a significant role in all regions of the province.*
> - *Is a major employer on both a year round and seasonal basis.*
> - *Generates significant tax revenues for Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments.*
> - *Supports the Island culture and way of life.* (Matrix Consulting Group, 1999, p.9)

Sightseeing is reported as the number one activity experienced by visitors, with a participation rate of 79 per cent (Department of Tourism, 2000, p.14). Soft adventures such as bird watching, boating and cycling have increased substantially in recent years. Eco-tourism is considered a rising star in the tourism sky. All of these activities are linked to the landscape quality offered by the urban and rural areas of the Island.

Focus groups conducted by the Randolph Group reinforce these findings.

A major appeal of PEI is its pastoral ambience which sets it apart from competitive destinations. PEI has a slower more relaxed pace, friendly, welcoming residents and a unique tranquillity and peacefulness combined with its beautiful landscape - red sands, rocks, cliffs and beaches. The rural character (villages, farmhouses and agriculture) and outdoor activities are major draws as is its cultural heritage....In continuing to develop or expand on existing tourism themes, it is important to keep this relaxed sense of timelessness and avoid excessive commercialism. (Randolf Group, 2000, p.viii)

In particular, middle-age and mature travellers are found to "have an affinity for the outdoors" (Randolph Group, 2000, p.vii). This is particularly noteworthy given that visitors in the 40 and over category represent 71 per cent of the market (Department of Tourism, 2000, p.13).

The findings of the Randolph Group are consistent with earlier land use reports. The Royal Commission on Land, for example, noted that "the importance of the tourism industry in the economy of Prince Edward Island means that the quality of the landscape is a dimension that must receive the careful attention of the public sector" (Boylan, 1991, p.299). They concluded that landscape should be of paramount consideration in government activities and an essential component of land policies. It recommended the *Highway Advertisements Act* be amended to establish within the law, that public interest requires protection be given to rural and urban landscapes (Boylan, 1991, p.531).

The Round Table on Resource Land Use and Stewardship (1997) recognized the province's working landscape was a key component of the tourism industry. The report also recognized the landscape was changing.

The network of farm fields, hedgerows, woodland, wetland, harbours and Island architecture forms a pleasant image and evokes a healthy lifestyle based on the land and the sea. However, we can no longer take for granted the view of Prince Edward Island as an attractive landscape and a healthy environment. (Round Table, 1997, p.114)

While the committee members recognize that sign control is only one component of protecting the landscape, it is a crucial one. It contributes to the image and feel of a place, and can influence how other structures and properties are developed and maintained. One only needs to look at jurisdictions where roadside signage is not controlled to imagine how different our landscape might be in the absence of signage legislation. The committee believes that signage has

the capacity to deplete the landscape capital such that it no longer provides a source of pride and identity for Islanders, and is no longer a significant infrastructure asset for the tourism industry. The recommendations set forward in this report are intended to ensure this does not happen.

The recommendations are also intended to promote public safety. While safety issues are primarily addressed by the *Roads Act*, safety is also an important component of the signage policy. A number of the recommendations put forward in this report are designed to ensure that the number of signs, their size and their placement are appropriate. The committee believes the number, size and placement of signs relates to their effectiveness, as well as public safety and landscape protection. The ability of motorists to see and comprehend the message on a sign also has safety implications. The proposed changes will have the impact of reducing the current number of off-premise signs, limiting the size of signs and improving legibility of provincial signs.

Finally, the recommendations are intended to ensure that there is an effective way-finding system in place. While signage control is necessary to protect the landscape and the public, signs are an important piece of tourism infrastructure, which must meet the needs of the travelling public. However, signs should constitute only one component of a multi-faceted way-finding system.

Objective

The objective of a signage policy should be to protect the landscape, promote safety and provide an effective way-finding system.

Guiding Principles

The committee identified a number of guiding principles to be used throughout this exercise as a means of evaluating the proposed changes and to guide them in achieving the defined objective. The committee believes that the following guiding principles should be adopted and, along with the objective, form the basis of a new signage policy:

- given that the unique landscape of the province is of intrinsic importance to Islanders and is a fundamental component of the province's appeal as a tourist destination, the roadways and land visible from roadways are not an appropriate place for advertising, and signage should result in no net loss of landscape quality;
- in the absence of roadside advertising, there must be an effective off-premise directional signage program which is part of a systematic approach to provide adequate way-finding information;
- the signage system must place public safety as a priority;
- the needs of the travelling public must be met;
- a level playing field for operators must be created and maintained;
- the system must require only change that is necessary and sufficient to address critical issues and meet the objective;
- the signage system must achieve an adequate balance between signage and protecting the landscape quality; and
- implementation and operation of the system must be manageable, affordable and allow for growth.

The first three of these principles are derived from the objective and discussed above, under the "Objective" heading. The remaining guiding principles are discussed below.

Needs of the Travelling Public – The target audience for any product or service must be the consumer. In the case of roadside signs, the consumer is the motorist. Road signs are intended to serve all motorists; however, different motorists have different needs. Local people generally know how to find local amenities, such as private clubs, and personal and professional services, and they know how to get to their destination. Visitors to an area, whether they are visitors to the Island or Islanders visiting unfamiliar parts of the province, may be familiar with the area or have adequate directional information such that they are not dependent on roadside signs. Other visitors not familiar with the area will be dependent on signs to influence decisions. To a large extent, visitors to the province are destination-oriented. Last year 59 per cent of pleasure visitors were repeat visitors to the Island (Department of Tourism, 2000, p.11). A large number of visitors arrive with reservations made and activities planned. For predetermined destinations, such as reservations at a bed and breakfast or a tee-off time at a golf course, travellers know the desired destination but may need directions to get there. With either type of traveller, some decisions made along the way are spontaneous, such as getting something to eat or browsing through a craft shop. These decisions may be influenced by signs. The committee believes that an effective signage policy responds to the various needs of travellers.

Level Playing Field – The committee sought to ensure the recommendations would work toward achieving a level playing field, with respect to access to signage by operators, by addressing current inequities in the program. There were numerous proposals on how to achieve a level playing field, from getting rid of all sign controls to, at the other end of the spectrum, getting rid of all signs. Most recommendations, however, were somewhere in-between. The committee believes that having a level playing field does not mean every operator must have identical signs. A level playing field should provide equal opportunity for operators to direct people to their business. The means by which this opportunity is met may be different, depending on where the operation is located. Signage itself should not be seen as the tool that levels all business interests. A provincial signage system cannot compensate for poor location, planning or product, or increased competition. The level playing field that is sought is equal opportunity for the consumer to find a location through a system that has integrity.

Necessity and Sufficiency – Within the established objective it must be determined to what extent the policy and its implementation measures must go to be successful. Our conclusion is that implementation should be guided by the rules of necessity and sufficiency. This means that, in effect, the measures taken — whether they are regulatory, educational or programs — should be required to meet the test of being necessary to achieve the objective, and sufficient to ensure successful implementation.

Balance – The committee sought to balance the need for commercial advertising and directional information with protection of the landscape. In doing so the committee leaned as much as possible in favour of signage without adversely affecting the quality of landscape. The key to this is a good signage policy that minimizes the negative impacts and enhances the positive impacts of signage. It goes without saying the balance selected has to respect public safety, particularly in relation to the highway system.

Affordable and Manageable – While there are no dollars assigned to the recommendations, and implementation costs have not been determined, the outcome of this effort will require new resources. The committee believes that this is a key investment for Islanders and for the tourism industry. Furthermore, it must be affordable for both the operator and the province.

The recommendations are intended to establish a manageable program that is fair, understandable and simple for travellers, operators and government. Part of being manageable is being functional in the current environment, while taking into consideration future needs and allowing for growth. It also has to be applied in a consistent manner, using as little discretion as possible.

Applying the Policy

Key to ensuring that the objective and guiding principles are met will be the proper integration of the policy into legislation and the consistent application of the policy.

It is the committee's contention that a clearly defined objective that is entrenched in legislation would work toward:

- strengthening the legislative base;
- establishing a basis on which to set the ground rules for a directional signage program; and
- improving the relationship among directional signs, road signs and other components of the tourism communications system.

The committee did not interpret its task to include the drafting of a sign definition, but does make recommendations as to what the parameters of such a definition should be. While those parameters are intentionally broad to include the various possibilities, later sections of the report narrow the proposed application of the regulations. The legislation must also be unmistakably clear as to what constitutes a sign and when and how the legislation should be applied. Recommendations are made throughout the report dealing with the specific application of the policy and legislation. In making these recommendations the committee took the approach that if a visual device is fulfilling the role of a sign, then it is a sign and should be treated as such.

Recommendations:

#1 The committee recommends that the objective of a signage policy should be to protect the landscape, promote safety and provide an effective way-finding system.

#2 The committee recommends that the following guiding principles be adopted and, along with the objective, form the basis of a new signage policy:

- given that the unique landscape of the province is of intrinsic importance to Islanders and is a fundamental component of the province's appeal as a tourist destination, the roadways and land visible from roadways are not an appropriate place for advertising and signage should result in no net loss of landscape quality;
- in the absence of roadside advertising, there must be an effective off-premise directional signage program which is part of a systematic approach to provide adequate way-finding information;
- the signage system must place public safety as a priority;
- the needs of the travelling public must be met;
- a level playing field for operators must be created and maintained;
- the system must require only change that is necessary and sufficient to address critical issues and meet the objective;
- the signage system must achieve an adequate balance between signage and protecting the landscape quality; and

- implementation and operation of the system must be manageable, affordable and allow for growth.

#3 The committee recommends that the objective of the signage policy be entrenched in legislation.

#4 The committee recommends that the policy and legislation clearly define what constitutes a sign. That definition should be as detailed and comprehensive as possible and include any visual communication device or means being used as a sign. It should include traditional signs, as well as flags, vehicles, and other devices being used as a sign.

Road Signs

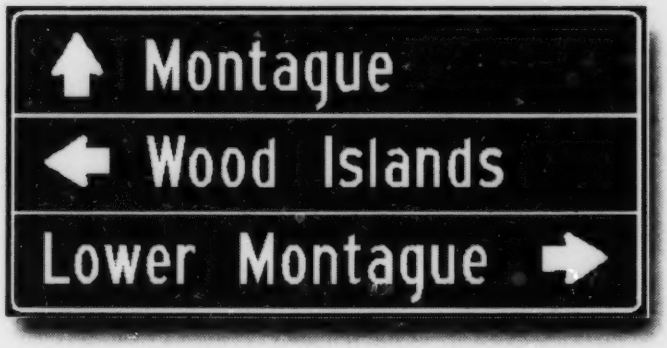
Prince Edward Island currently operates a system of road signs providing direction to motorists, consisting of the following:

Route Signs – All numbered routes in the province are signed (black non-reflective numbers on a white reflective background). Signs are located on the approach to the intersection with the route number, as well as the number of the intersecting route with supplemental directional arrows and direction tabs (North, South, East and West). This forms what is referred to as a route assembly. The route number is posted again after an intersection with another route. "ENDS" is posted under the route number to indicate where a numbered route terminates at an intersection.

Symbols – Symbols are included at route assemblies to indicate directions to hospitals, national parks, airports, police and visitor information centers. These symbols are based upon the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada*.

Scenic Drives – These signs (non-reflective red, blue or purple on a white reflective background) are placed at all decision points along the Lady Slipper Drive, Blue Heron Drive and Kings Byway Drive with additional confirmation signs along the route.

Guide Signs – These signs (white reflective letters on a green background) are placed on the approach to all intersections, and in some cases on overhead signs, with a maximum of three destinations in the order of straight, left and right.



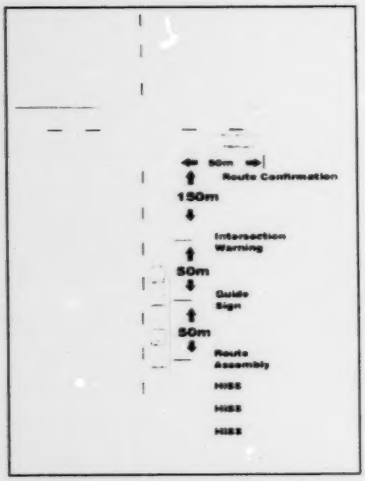
Confirmation Distance Sign – Confirmation distance signs (white reflective letters on a green background) are placed after a major intersection. These signs show first the distance to the next town, city or community, and secondly the town, city or community at the end of the route.

Road/Street Name Signs – Road name signs (white reflective letters on a green background) are located at the top of the right-of-way control sign (stop or yield) at each end of the road and at intersecting points with other roads. Over 1,100 privately owned roads are currently being signed in a similar fashion, with the word "PRIVATE" underlined below.

Community Name Signs – Community signs (white reflective letters on a blue background) for approximately 500 incorporated and unincorporated communities are erected at the boundary on each approach on most paved and some unpaved roads. Some communities have had their own signs made and erected in place of, or in addition to, the signs provided by the province.

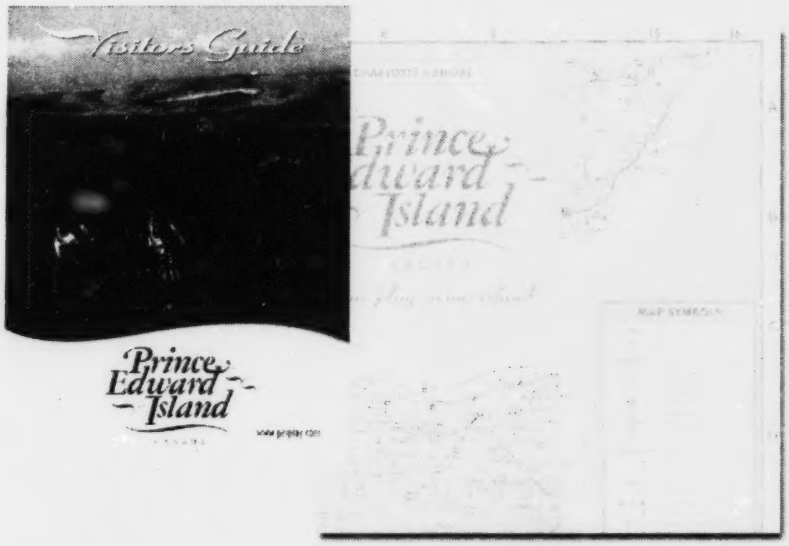
Highway Information Signage System – HISS signs (white reflective letters on a painted non-reflective black background, with distance on a green tab on the left side) are placed on the approach to an intersection to indicate a change in direction to a particular operation.

These signs are placed in a particular sequence approaching an intersection: HISS signs, route assembly, guide sign, intersection warning sign and right-of-way control sign. The Department of Transportation and Public Works, Traffic Operations Section, is responsible for erecting and maintaining all signs within the highway right-of-ways of Prince Edward Island. Guide signs and route assemblies on the main arteries through the cities of Charlottetown and Summerside and the towns of Souris, Georgetown, Montague, Kensington and Alberton are also erected and maintained by the department. Other signs within these cities and towns are the responsibility of the municipalities.



Visitors and locals shared their experiences of getting lost and having difficulty finding their desired destinations. Others have provided the committee with praise for the network of directional information that has enabled them to efficiently find their way. Unlike previous reviews, such as the 1991 Royal Commission on the Land and the 1991 Review Committee, the committee found the network of road signs to be effective, but not without room for some improvement.

Adequate road signs are an integral element of reducing the need for off-premise signs. Many visitors already have some sense of where they are going with information from business operators, the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*, which lists 540 place names and 10 points of interest, and the *Visitors Guide*. If operators provide visitors with the route number and name of the community in which they are located, the road sign network should provide clear direction to the community. Signage to a specific operation would then only be required in that community. The greatest challenge will be to accustom Islanders to use community and route numbers when providing directions.



The committee believes that the use of touring regions or routes, which are adequately signed, would complement the approach being recommended in this report. At the time of this review, a study of the province's touring product was also under way. For that reason, the committee reserves comment on the designation of these areas.

Conclusions

The approach sought is that travellers seeking a destination be directed to communities of the province first via routes, and then to specific locations in the local area. The committee believes the key to achieving this is, and should continue to be, the route signs and guide signs. The proposed improvements to the road sign system are designed to help people find their way and reduce some of the dependence on off-premise signs.

Recommendations:

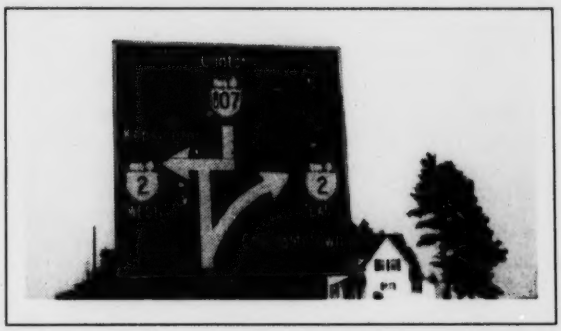
#5 The committee recommends that supplementary directional signs indicating North, South, East and West be placed on route signs along arterial and collector highways, and along those local roads that are heavily travelled.

#6 The committee recommends that additional confirmation distance signs be put in place.

#7 The committee recommends that route numbers be added to existing overhead guide signs.

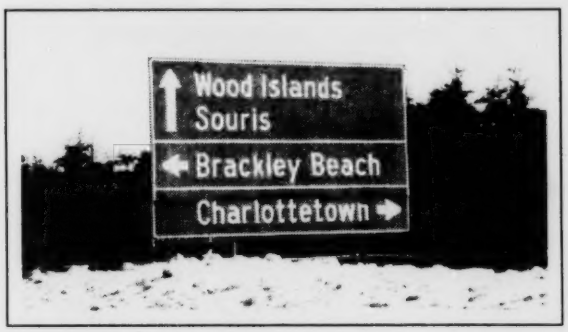
#8 The committee recommends that a second route assembly sign, placed immediately before the intersection, be put in place where an arterial and a collector highway intersect.

#9 The committee recommends that diagrammatic directional boards be placed at all intersections that may cause confusion, such as Read's Corner and Kensington.

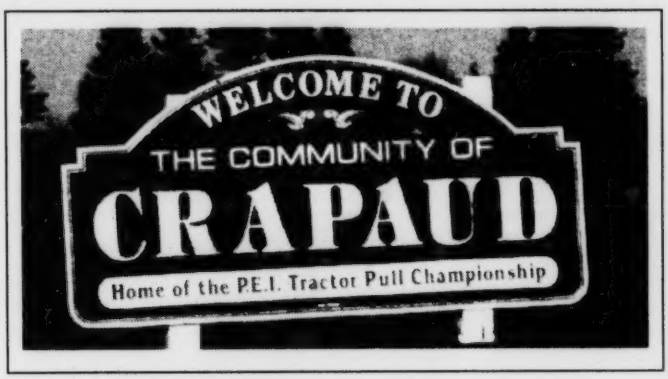


#10 The committee recommends that route signs and guide signs be constructed with materials having reflective properties.

#11 The committee recommends that place names on guide signs be consistent with the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.



#12 The committee recommends that communities be encouraged to develop their community name signs subject to size and location requirements established by the province, but without provincial regulation of design, material or maintenance. The government-supplied community name signs should be removed where a municipally supplied name sign is visible at the boundary. Guidelines for community name signs should be established to provide assistance to municipalities in developing their own signs.



#13 The committee recommends that any designated touring region be adequately signed in a manner consistent with printed material provided by the province.

On-premise Signs

On-premise signs not only provide information through the written message, but their design and quality provide an important message about the business. They have an impact on the landscape of the province; and, when these signs can be seen from the road, they are considered to be of a provincial interest. Based on this premise, the province has assumed a role in regulating on-premise signs. Provisions of the *Highway Advertisements Act* Regulations include:

- a licence requirement for all free-standing on-premise signage intended to be seen from a public road (with a number of exemptions), but does not regulate a facia advertisement placed flat against the front or end walls of a building;
- prohibition on mobile signs, on-premise or off-premise;
- standards for location, size and height of legal signage;
- provision for the removal of signs erected in contravention of the regulations; and
- a $10 licensing fee.

In practice, things are different. Tourism PEI indicates that licences have not been issued consistently for the past decade, and not at all for the past five years. Those who make application are given verbal approval or denial for their signs. Many others simply do not make application to the province at all.

While there were some recommendations for improvement made to the committee, people and businesses generally appear to be satisfied with the current provisions for signs on their properties. Areas of concern include inconsistency in application of the regulations, stationary vehicles being used as signs, signing multiple businesses on a lot, and sign design, content and structure.

The committee is aware of many jurisdictions, particularly in the New England States, where design, colour and material of private signs are regulated as part of a movement to create a desired image. While these efforts may be desirable, the committee does not believe that it would be generally acceptable for the province to regulate what is a very subjective matter. The committee does, however, believe that this can be an appropriate role for municipalities that wish to take on this initiative.

The recommendations put forward are intended to provide adequate opportunity for on-premise signing and to improve the administration of the regulations, while meeting the objective and guiding principles.

Recommendations:

#14 The committee recommends that on-premise signs be subject to the following limits, regardless of the number of businesses located on the property:

- a maximum of one free-standing sign per parcel, except where a business is located on a corner or meets other special circumstances as defined in regulation, two signs shall be the maximum;
- one on-premise sandwich board sign, as long as it is not a safety hazard, is located on the premise, not the right-of-way, and fits within defined size requirements; and
- limit facia signs to a percentage of the area of the building wall, but not regulate the number of facia signs.

#15 The committee recommends that regulations relating to on-premise signs include:

- existing size, height and setback regulations;
- specific criteria for determining size and height; and
- size and height standards for roof signs and projecting signs (that do not project beyond the height of the roof).

#16 The committee recommends that the province consistently use a permit system for on-premise signs, charge a fee set out in regulation designed to cover the administrative costs, and use a licence sticker adhered to the sign.

#17 The committee recommends that there are certain types of signs that should be allowed without a permit, provided they do not exceed an established maximum size requirement and, where applicable, that they are removed within the appropriate time frames, such as the following:

- signs which are necessary for public safety and welfare;
- signs relating to federal, provincial, municipal or regional school board elections;
- notices authorized to be posted pursuant to any enactment or order of a court;
- no trespassing signs;
- signs which are incidental to construction, while construction is in progress;
- name and address of resident;
- floral and landscaping arrangements;
- directional signs indicating parking or street entrances and exits;
- signs designed to give directions or identify features to patrons within the property;
- window signs which are not internally lit;
- identification signs for entrance to a residential neighbourhood;

- flags or pennants of a municipal, provincial or federal government; and
- yard sale signs.

#18 The committee recommends that mobile signs, including mobile signs that have been altered, be prohibited.

#19 The committee recommends that real estate companies be required to obtain an annual sign permit. Signs will be subject to size, placement and removal requirements set under legislation.

Off-premise Signs

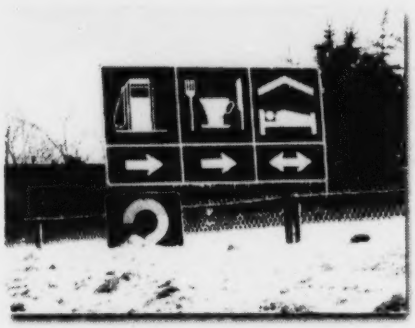
Present Highway Information Signage System Policy

The Highway Information Signage System (HISS) was introduced across the province in 1974 as a means to provide way-finding information to visitors. The intent was to provide directional information to destinations, as opposed to advertising.

HISS signs are recognized under the regulations of the *Highway Advertisements Act* as one category of sign not requiring a licence. Otherwise, they are not regulated in law. A Policy Manual for HISS exists as a joint agreement between the departments of Transportation and Public Works and Tourism. The manual outlines procedures for application, the permissible sign message, fees, refunds, placement policy, sign-free areas, sign standards (posts), waiting lists, discretion to provide, and eligibility, as summarized below.

Content – The sign is to include the name of the business only, and not the number of units, dates of operation, products or location, unless it is part of the name. Wording is limited to two rows of 12 characters each. A left or right arrow and distance are also included.

Placement – Signs may be placed within the highway right-of-way at an approach to an intersection where a motorist must change direction or route number. Placement is limited to a maximum of 15 kilometres from the operation.



Sign-Free Areas – Sign-free areas exist at Pooles Corner, Wood Islands, Cherry Valley, Cavendish, Albany and along the perimeter arterial highway in Charlottetown. These areas were chosen because requests for signs exceeded the available space. Some signs that existed prior to the designation as a sign-free area have been grandfathered. The by-pass road around Charlottetown is the only section of limited-access highway in the province and it is served by symbol signage at all intersections.

Sign Standards – A maximum of three signs per standard (post) are permitted with a maximum of three standards (thus nine signs) on each approach to an intersection. This is considered the maximum amount of information that a motorist is able to absorb. In practice, there are exceptions where four signs per post exist, and 18 locations where there are four standards on one leg of an intersection. When applications exceed space available, waiting lists are maintained to accommodate applicants on a first-come, first-served basis.

Municipalities - The policy states that signs are not to be placed within a city or town; however, there are grandfather provisions for signs in place prior to the policy. As well, signs are placed in some towns along numbered highways with the approval of the town.

Sight Distance - Special allowance is made in the policy for businesses with restricted sight distances. For safety reasons, business locations that are obscured by a curve or a hill may be provided with a straight-ahead HISS sign.

Application and Fees - Applications are received by Tourism PEI and the fee is to be paid before signs are erected. The Department of Transportation and Public Works is responsible for erecting signs. Reference is made to an Appeals Committee whose rulings must conform to the *Planning Act* and *Roads Act*, although in practice there is no appeals board.

The policy provides the Department of Tourism, in consultation with the Department of Transportation and Public Works, some discretion on the application of the program. Special requests for exemptions are made for a variety of reasons and each is assessed on its own merits. One area of discretion allowed is with respect to the number of signs per operation. Originally, operators were allowed two signs, with an additional two if the demand was demonstrated. The needs test for the second two signs was eliminated and four signs became the standard, although a number of businesses currently have between five and ten signs.

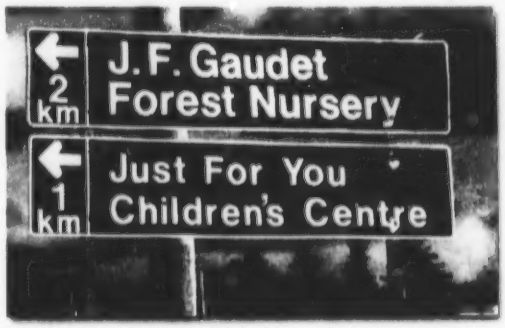
Outstanding Issues

The HISS program has served visitors, Islanders and business operators well for a number of years — but not without its fair share of problems. Pressure has been mounting on the program in recent years. Each component of the existing program has been reconsidered as part of this process. The following section summarizes the main issues that the committee reviewed.

Clarity - The current policy and regulations are not sufficiently detailed to enable those responsible for administration to effectively implement the objectives. As such, questions frequently arise regarding the application and scope. They are left struggling with issues such as signage on private roads, trucks being used as signs, and non-traditional methods of roadside advertising. Improved clarity in the policy and regulations would be beneficial to those administering the program and all stakeholders.

Capacity - The HISS program was designed in the 1970s when visitation levels were at 300,000 to 400,000 people a year. The increase in tourism visitation, at 1.18 million in 2000, has generated a corresponding increase in businesses serving their needs. Statistics from Quality Tourism Services indicated that in the accommodations sector alone, the number of licenced properties increased 42 per cent from 1995 to 2000 (from 716 to 1020) — with a 20 per cent increase in the number of accommodation units. These new businesses have increased the demand for signage. As a result, waiting lists are currently maintained on approximately 30 legs of intersections. Many of them are around incorporated towns, but most others are in the centre of the province in tourism areas such as the North Shore. For example, access points off Route 2 to New London, Stanley

Bridge and New Glasgow are full, as well as most intersections within New Glasgow, Stanley Bridge and New London.



Eligible Businesses – The HISS system was originally intended as a directional program available to businesses providing services to tourists. While the existing policy does not define eligible businesses, the fee schedule provides the following categories of businesses: accommodations, food service, craft/gift outlets, attractions, recreation areas, and other goods and services. This list incorporates just about any business that might be interested in having a sign. As a result, operators such as government agencies, law offices, body shops, funeral parlours, child-care services and car dealerships currently have HISS signs. This deviation from the original intent to a system used by local businesses and non-profit organizations has happened, in part, because eligible businesses are not defined, and the objective of protecting the landscape is not entrenched in the legislation.

Straight-Ahead Signs – While straight-ahead and driveway signs have been prohibited in the policy since 1991 existing signs were grandfathered with no sunset clauses. These signs remain an irritant to operators and are contrary to a level playing field concept.

Exemptions and Unauthorized Signs – Examples can be found of exemptions that have been made to almost every section of the current policy. Signs are in place which include dates of operation, descriptive words, and more than 24 characters. There are also signs which are further than 15 kilometres from the operation, standards which have more than three signs, and intersections where there are more than three standards. These exemptions are visible to the public and to competitors, who then expect the same treatment. When exemptions are made, the whole system gets called into question.

Although the prohibition on off-premise signs has been in place for years, there are in existence a number of off-premise signs. Some have been allowed in instances where a business was not visible from a main route. Others have been erected without approval and have not been removed. Those that have been authorized by the province were not issued permits. There are about 15 to 20 signs in this grandfathered category across the province. Tourism PEI has successfully negotiated the removal of many unauthorized off-premise signs over the years; however, there are no statistics available showing how many unauthorized signs there are in existence. Again, the existence of these signs calls the whole system into question.

HISS in Municipalities – The existing policy prohibits new HISS signs being approved in incorporated towns or cities, yet pressure is increasing to sign businesses there. As well, as a result of municipal amalgamation in 1995, there are a number of HISS signs within the new boundaries of the cities and towns, which when originally put in place were not

part of a city or town. There are no plans to remove these signs. Opinion is divided on whether or not HISS should be located within the boundaries of cities and towns.

Sign Material and Colour Considerations - Presently, HISS signs are painted with opaque black paint, and with cut-out letters from engineer-grade tape. To be effective, it is imperative that signs be visible during the day and night. Day-time visibility "is determined by the amount and colour of light it gives off compared to the amount of light given off by its surroundings" (3M, 1997). Nighttime visibility is dependent on luminance — that is, the light from an illuminated reflective surface. For signs which are not illuminated, the primary consideration of nighttime visibility is the reflectivity of the material used. Luminance is important to all drivers, but becomes increasingly important with age of the driver. Older drivers need much more luminance to be able to read a sign. This is an important consideration, given the age of the travelling public. The Department of Transportation and Public Works records for 1999 indicate that 35 per cent of drivers licensed on Prince Edward Island are 50 years of age or over. The exit survey revealed that 71 per cent of the visitors to the Island in 2000 were over 40 years of age (Department of Tourism, 2000, p.13). These numbers are expected to increase in the coming years as baby boomers move into these age cohorts.

Maine, USA

Ontario, Canada

The range of colours that can be used for way-finding signs is limited, not only because they must be highly visible, but also because they must not conflict with regulatory signs. While the focus group favoured the current sign colour combination, white letters on black do not allow for the appropriate amount of luminance. Unfortunately, the effect of these colour combinations at night was not tested with the focus group. Research indicates that the trend across North America for tourism road signs is a blue reflective background with white reflective lettering. This combination provides an appropriate level of luminance and contrast, a distinctive tourism look, and does not interfere with highway warning signs.

It is understood that the existing provincial sign-making facilities have the capacity to produce signs with a more reflective material but there would be increased cost to do so.

Legibility – In addition to sign material and colour, legibility is an important consideration in the make-up of any sign. In order to improve legibility and reduce information load, it is best to use the minimum text required to clearly convey the primary message. While the current policy limits the number of characters, exemptions are frequently made. These requirements need to be strictly adhered to if legibility is to be achieved. The use of standardized symbols in addition to text provides opportunity for quick recognition, as well as assistance to those whose first language is not English (or French, depending on the sign) and those with low levels of literacy. The use of symbols in combination with text will require a reduction in the allowable characters.

Closed Tabs – The HISS policy does not allow information regarding operating dates on the sign, although at least one business has its closing date printed on the HISS sign. The 1991 Review Committee Report recommended that standard "closed" tabs be used to cover the sign during the off-season and that they be installed by the operator. Closed tabs are in use in some jurisdictions. Proponents of the use of closed tabs argue that they prevent visitors from going to a business, only to find that it is closed for the season, which is particularly important if it is an out-of-the-way destination. The committee recognizes that this could provide a valuable service to travellers; however, the committee also recognizes that unless they are used by all seasonal businesses and placed in a timely and consistent manner, they could be creating expectations that all businesses without a closed tab are open. Given that opening and closing dates vary, it would be an ongoing process for a large part of the year to install and remove the tabs. In order to ensure consistency and public safety, the committee believes that placement and removal of the tabs would have to be the responsibility of the administering department or someone acting on its behalf. Production, installation and removal of the tabs would add significant costs to the sign program. The committee believes that information regarding operating dates and particular products and services is best conveyed to customers through other means, such as the *Visitors Guide*, published materials and Web sites.

Accessibility Symbols – The committee received a request from the Council of the Disabled, and one individual, that the HISS signs include symbols advising travellers on the accessibility, either partial or full, of a particular location. The committee recognizes that using these symbols could provide valuable information to travellers, but only if there is some assurance that the information is accurate. The committee believes that operators should have the option to include a symbol on the sign, based upon receiving a recognized accreditation.

Temporary Signs – Signs displayed on a temporary basis, such as for a community event, have not in practice been subject to the requirements of the act, although they are not excluded. While only temporary, these signs do have an impact on the landscape, and if left unchecked may interfere with the province's efforts to protect the landscape by minimizing the negative effects of signs. The committee recognizes that the regulation and enforcement of temporary signs will be challenging; however, the committee believes that it is crucial that this area be addressed and that temporary signs be regulated.

Based on the review of these issues, the committee concludes that the province's regulation of off-premise signs and the HISS program should be extensively redefined.

Alternatives

In determining how the HISS program might be redefined, the committee explored a number of signage tools and programs used in other jurisdictions. A brief description and analysis follow.

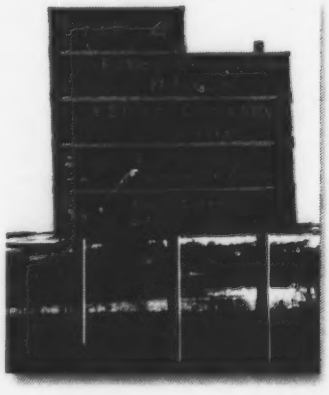
Tourism-Oriented Directional Signage (TODS) – These programs are intended to provide direction, not advertising, for visitors. The signs are standard for all businesses operating in the system. The appearance of the signs, eligibility requirements and administration vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The current HISS program on PEI is similar to many of the TODS programs in existence, although the eligibility criteria is usually much stricter in a TODS program, limiting it to tourism-oriented businesses.

Sign Corridors – The concept of a sign corridor is to permit, through regulation, signage within an approach to a municipality. The intention is to prevent the proliferation of signs throughout the rural landscape, while providing information regarding the businesses in a municipality. It does not however, provide signs for businesses outside the municipality. To be successful it must achieve the appropriate spacing and quality of signs and consistency with the image of a municipality. While there are benefits of the sign corridor or zone approach. The committee concludes it is contrary to the overall objective of protecting the landscape and the goal of creating and maintaining a level playing field.

Logo Signs – Logo sign systems use company logos or trademarks in a small standardized manner on roadside signs. It is the only type of commercial sign allowed on the Federal Interstate Highway System in the United States. More than 40 states have an Interstate Logo Sign Program. Logo signs are also used in several Canadian jurisdictions. While this type of program has the advantage of a condensed format and provides quick reference for motorists, it favours large businesses, mostly chains, with easily recognizable logos. The committee concludes that limiting signs to logo signs would not meet the needs of Islanders, businesses or visitors.

Symbols – The *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* includes 19 standard symbols: hospital, police, telephone, airport (large and small), parking, ferry, fuel (with and without diesel), food, accommodation, travel information, bed and breakfast, trailer camp, tent camp, picnic, viewpoint, boat launch and museum. Some of these symbols, such as hospital and airport, are used on PEI as part of the route assemblies. Along the Charlottetown By-pass, symbols are used exclusively and HISS signs are prohibited. In many jurisdictions these, along with other non-uniform symbols, are used along major highways to indicate the services that are available at a particular turn-off. In some

Nova Scotia, Canada



areas, symbols are used in conjunction with TODS or guide signs to assist in reducing the number of characters required. One of the challenges of using symbols as a central component of a signage system is that many businesses are not covered by a recognized symbol. They also do not assist someone looking for a specific business.

Some jurisdictions use a combination of symbols and text. This concept was tested with the focus group and well received. It allows for quick recognition and provides specific information.

Kiosks – There are a variety of signage kiosks in use across North America. Many states and some provinces have rest stops along major highways, which also include information kiosks. The Resort Municipality of Stanley Bridge, Hope River, Bayview, Cavendish and North Rustico has three sign kiosks that provide a map and listing of the businesses in the area. Some jurisdictions such as Oregon have a computerized kiosk system. One of the most extensive signage kiosk systems is in the State of Vermont.

Cavendish, PEI

Vermont began using information plazas as part of its sign control in 1968, and was extended across the state by 1974. Businesses registered in the state may purchase plaques to be displayed in the plaza under the international symbol. The plazas have a rustic appearance, are lit, inexpensive to build, and durable (some have been in place for 20 years). Some, but not all, plazas have what they refer to as "control areas" in which Official Business Directory Signs may not be erected. There are 26 state-owned plazas and 58 plazas owned and operated by municipal organizations, with laminated maps provided by the state. The appearance and maintenance of the municipal information plazas vary. Overall, the Agency of Transportation, the responsible government body, reports that the information plazas are accepted by travellers and that usage is high, although some operators are not convinced of their usage.

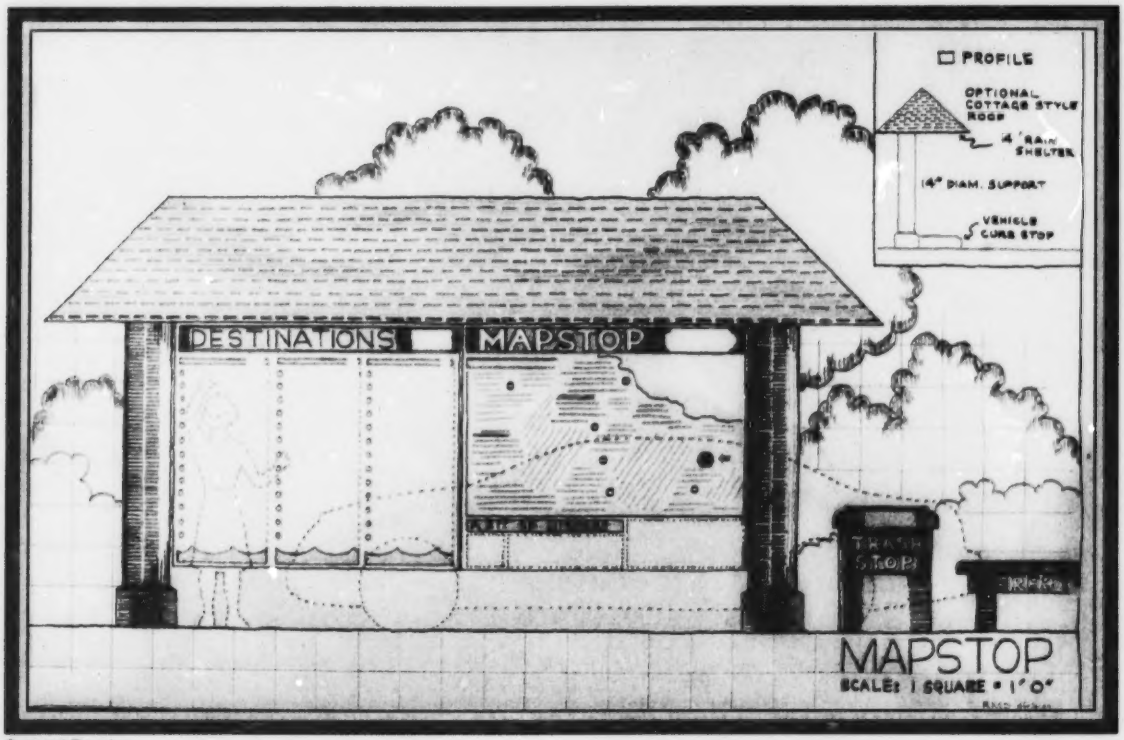
The advantage of the kiosk approach is that a number of signs can be brought together in one location off the highway, reducing clutter, increasing access to signs by creating more capacity, and improving highway safety by providing a place for travellers to stop to read information. Kiosks can also be provided in conjunction with other services, such as picnic areas or scenic view points. In addition, they can provide an opportunity to display historical and cultural information and to highlight non-commercial attractions and features.

Off-premise Signs

In order to maintain the ban on roadside advertising, the committee concludes that there must be a viable way-finding system in place. While the HISS program has provided that way-finding system, for the past two decades, for the reasons outlined in this report, substantial changes are required. The committee believes that a new way-finding system which is designed to address the critical issues and meet the objectives and guiding principles that have been identified, should be established to replace HISS. The system the committee is recommending should be called the Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program and made up of two main components: a network of signage kiosks referred to as map-stops and roadside directional signs.

Map-Stops

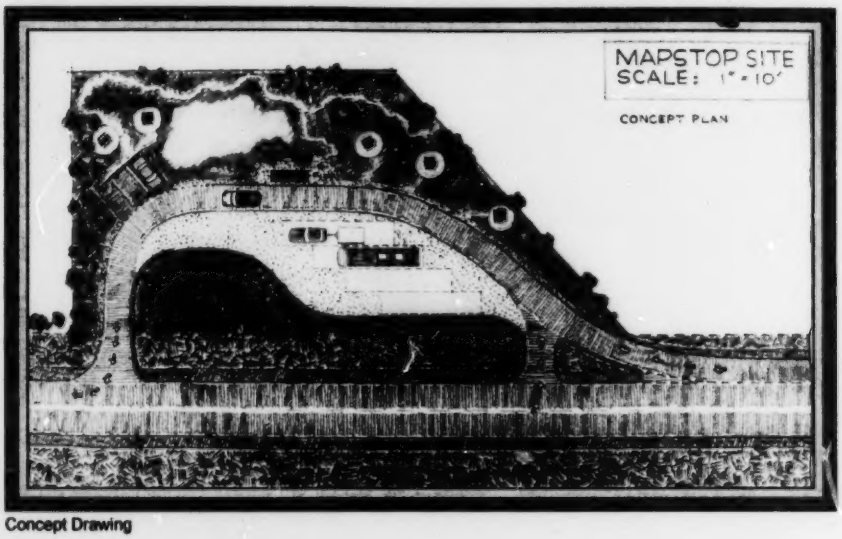
The map-stop component would consist of a network of map-stops strategically located in areas of high demand for signs, which would provide directional information for eligible businesses



Concept Drawing

in a designated area. These would be attractive, durable structures with safe access and parking. Highway directional signs to the map-stops would be erected. The map-stop would include a map of the area, an insert map of the larger area and a numbered listing of the businesses providing tourism-related services by category. The geographic area serviced by the map-stop would be identified as a designated area within which the map-stop contains the only permitted off-premise sign.

It is critical to the success of the map-stops that they contain the only off-premise signs in the area — with the exception of signs directing visitors to the map-stops. This provides the same signing opportunity for eligible businesses in the areas and ensures that all eligible businesses have a signing opportunity, thereby eliminating the need for waiting lists. As well, providing only one option for off-premise signing will contribute to achieving the critical density of listings to make map-stops a useful tool for travellers.



Concept Drawing

The distinct advantage of map-stops is that they have almost infinite capacity. Designed properly, they will accommodate not only the current demand but also future growth.

The concept of using map-stops to provide visitor information was received very positively by the focus group. Members of the focus group who have used them in other jurisdictions found it to be a very positive experience. They concluded that the use of map-stops on PEI would be extremely beneficial and would provide more information than drive-by signs.

Participants of the focus groups also indicated that:

- map-stops should be just off the highway;
- there should be signs indicating that a map-stop is upcoming; and
- it would be useful to provide a number of other traveller-related services in conjunction with a map-stop.

The exact locations of map-stops would be determined by Tourism PEI. These locations would cover the current sign-free areas, as well as areas where waiting lists are in place. Tourism PEI, working with the local area and taking into consideration the demand for signs and the needs and features of the area, would develop a plan for each site.

Roadside Directional Signs

The roadside directional sign component would consist of a new system, providing direction to tourism-related services from designated decision points. The directional roadside signs would be used outside the areas designated for map-stops. These signs would be similar to the current HISS signs in size and shape, but would be fabricated with reflective white lettering on a blue reflective background. Operators would have a choice to use text only or a combination of text and symbol. The number and location of signs for businesses would be determined by a key decision-point system. Intersections designated as key decision-points would be identified in the

regulations. Operations would be eligible to place signs from two of the nearest decision-points to their operation and have signs at each required turn or change of route from those two decision- points to their operation.

The only exemption to the policy regarding placement of signs should be where, for safety reasons due to a sharp curve or poor sight distance, the minister determines that a straight-ahead arrow is warranted.

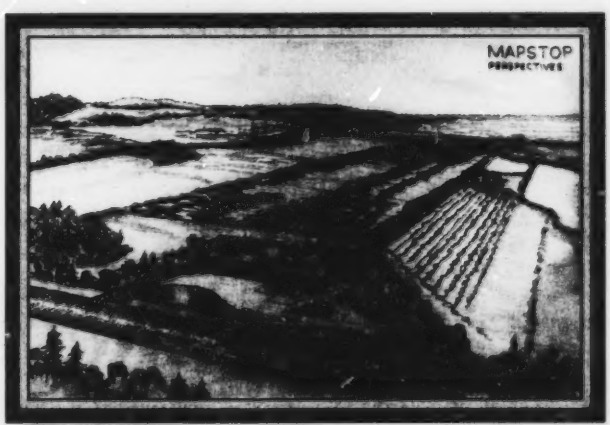
Concept Drawing

Both components of the program would focus on meeting the needs of the traveller. Eligible businesses would be limited to traveller-oriented operations. Operators would have the option of listing their business in English, French or both languages as long as they stay within the allowable characters.

This way-finding system would not operate in the cities or towns. They are encouraged to establish similar programs within their boundaries. Tourism PEI would work with any municipality which has, or would like to develop, a way-finding program in place of the provincial program.

Recommendations:

#20 The committee recommends that private off-premise signs continue to be prohibited and that a new Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program made up of off-premise directional roadside signs and map-stop areas (kiosks), be developed to replace the current HISS program.



Concept Drawing

#21 The committee recommends that Tourism PEI and the Department of Transportation and Public Works establish a series of map-stop sites in areas of high demand for signs, considering the following criteria for determining the location of a map-stop:

- consistency with the objectives and guiding principles of the policy;

- level of demand for signs in the area;
- relationship to the major decision-point concept;
- safety of access to the site;
- room for access and parking;
- proximity to the main road;
- availability of other services and scenic viewing areas; and
- possibility to locate at a Visitor Information Centre, provincial park or municipal land.

This would involve working with the communities and local tourist operators identifing the site, developing a maintenance plan, and identifying features of the community that would be included on the map-stop (cultural information, facilities such as parks, boardwalks and churches).

#22 The committee recommends that eligible businesses under the Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program be limited to:

- attractions including museums, art galleries, historic sites, theme/amusement parks, cultural attractions, natural phenomena, recreation facilities, guided tours, genealogical and historical sites, and animal/plant attractions;
- artisan/craft demonstrations and shops;
- commercial accommodations such as resorts, hotels/motels, country inns, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds;
- restaurants; and
- antique shops.

Furthermore, specific exclusions from eligibility be listed, including:

- private "for members only" clubs and organizations; and
- businesses without the required licence.

#23 The committee recommends that the content of roadside signs or listings in a map-stop under the new program:

- include only the name of the business;
- not include advertising of products or features;
- not include the number of units, facilities available or other descriptive words that are not part of the name;
- not include operating dates; and
- be listed in English, French or both, staying within the allowable number of characters.

#24 The committee recommends that roadside signs:

- consist of up to 28 characters without symbol (14 characters per line) or 20 characters with symbol (10 characters per line) including spaces;
- include an arrow and distance on the left, and symbols when used, on the right; and
- be placed on the approach to an intersection with those requiring a left turn first, followed by those requiring a right turn.

#25 The committee recommends that an operation that has received accreditation from a recognized organization as being partially or fully accessible may, at their request, include the appropriate symbol on their roadside sign or map-stop listing. Use of this symbol on the roadside sign would reduce the allowable characters available for the sign message by two.

#26 The committee recommends that Tourism PEI, in consultation with industry, determine the symbols that should be used as part of the roadside sign for services and operations which do not have a symbol assigned in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada*. Tourism PEI should take into consideration symbols used in other jurisdictions and the symbols used in the *Visitors Guide* and *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.

#27 The committee recommends that generic stand-alone symbols be used for the following:

- emergency and transportation services as defined in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* (hospital, police, phone, airports, parking and ferry);
- only the following traveller services as defined in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* (picnic, viewpoint, boat launch and information); and
- trails, and national, provincial and municipal parks.

#28 The committee recommends that a permit, obtained by the owner of the property, be required for all temporary and permanent signs, including special events and promotion of causes, with restrictions in place regarding the size, number of signs, setback and length of time.

Municipal Signage Bylaws

Legislation

There are presently 75 municipalities in the province: two cities, seven towns and 66 communities. These municipalities represent a significant portion (70 per cent) of the province's population, and 30 per cent of its land area. Under the various and poorly integrated provisions of the *Highway Advertisements Act, Municipalities Act, Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act, City of Summerside Act* and the *Planning Act,* many of these municipalities have taken on a range of signage controls. The subject matter, standards and administration of these controls vary widely, but in general focus on establishing standards for on-premise signs. There are no standard provisions in place across the province.

Cities and towns, while not excluded form the *Highway Advertisements Act* itself, are excluded from the regulations. Since the signage standards are set by regulation, effectively this means there are no provincial standards in the cities and towns.

The *Municipalities Act* covers all municipalities except Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall (which are governed by the *Charlottetown Area Municipalities Act*) and Summerside (which is governed by the *City of Summerside Act*). Under the *Municipalities Act,* municipalities have the potential power to pass signage bylaws dealing with size, location, use and advertising. However, incorporated communities that were former community improvement committees (CICs), and municipalities that have been incorporated since the *Municipalities Act* was proclaimed, must acquire the power from the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs. Communities which were formerly villages do not have to do so. Municipal bylaws passed under the *Municipalities Act* require filing with, but not approval of, the minister. The Department of Community and Cultural Affairs records show that two municipalities (the Resort Municipality and Souris) have signage bylaws passed under the *Municipalities Act.*

The *Planning Act* governs municipal planning. Twenty-seven of the municipalities (both cities, all seven towns and 18 communities) have official plans and bylaws approved by the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs under the *Planning Act.* This gives the municipality jurisdiction over land use and development, subject to province-wide development standards and the regulatory limits in the legislation. The jurisdiction to regulate signage under official plans and their bylaws is indirect and somewhat questionable. Nevertheless, the cities, towns and four communities have sections under their zoning bylaws that regulate signage.

While bylaws approved under the *Planning Act* and the *Municipalities Act* may be the same in content, there are two noteworthy differences:

- bylaws passed under the *Planning Act* are reviewed by the department subject to approval by the minister, whereas bylaws passed under the *Municipalities Act* are filed with the minister; and
- bylaws passed under the *Planning Act* are appealable to the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission (IRAC), whereas bylaws passed under the *Municipalities Act* are not.

Provincial Standards

It is important to note that, under the current legislative arrangements, where a municipality has exercised its signage control option, there still remains a requirement for a provincial permit under the *Highway Advertisements Act*. Following the letter of the law, the result would be a double permitting system, where approval would be required from both the municipality and the province. As with any municipal bylaw, signage bylaws must be constructed to ensure they are not contrary to any provincial legislation. Inconsistency with provincial legislation would make the offending section inoperative. No provision currently exists for the local bylaws to be no less stringent than the provincial standards nor to eliminate the need for two permits. The committee believes that this creates unnecessary red tape and should be avoided. Several submissions to the committee, including some from municipalities, supported a no less stringent approach, ensuring consistency across the province.

Urban Municipalities

While the committee recognizes the landscape of urban areas is different from rural areas, and as such what may be appropriate for signage may also be different, they also recognizes that the urban landscape of PEI is an important component of the PEI landscape. Visitors to the Island are often surprised and even disappointed to find the urban landscape of the Island is not that different from where they came from, often with large bright signs dominating the street scape. Therefore, the committee concludes that there is some role for the province in these areas, if only to a limited degree.

Municipal Administration

The committee also heard concern that municipalities should not be burdened with, or willingly assume, responsibilities that are beyond their capability. The committee recognizes that many of the municipalities have limited resources and this creates challenges with respect to administration and enforcement. In terms of staff resources, while the cities have a substantial number of employees, the communities generally have one employee, who may only be part-time. Municipal annual budgets are wide-ranging, from a few thousand dollars to $30 million. Of the 66 communities, 42 have budgets of less than $50,000. Many of the small municipalities have very low per capita assessments, therefore requiring significant increases to raise any additional revenue. Limited budgets have an impact on the planning and enforcement capabilities of municipalities, particularly for an issue that can be contentious and costly.

An Appropriate Role for Municipalities

The committee believes that municipalities have and should continue to have an important role in regulating signage. The committee also recognizes that there is a difference between municipal and provincial interests in signage control. A good municipal signage bylaw should take into consideration broader issues in the municipality relating to its social, economic and environmental objectives — thus going beyond what has been defined as the provincial objectives. In developing a signage bylaw, a municipality should ask itself what it is that the municipality wants to be and how a signage bylaw can help to achieve this.

While the committee believes that municipalities are an important player in signage control, there is considerable unnecessary complexity, inconsistency and confusion over the role of municipalities in regulating signage. Municipalities and residents have expressed a desire for

clarification. The committee believes they can be addressed through stronger provincial legislation that would entrench clear objectives and clarify the role of municipalities. If the province is going to delegate authority to a municipality to regulate signage, the committee believes they must be assured that the municipality has the capability to administer and enforce a bylaw. The committee believes the autonomy of municipalities must be respected, but at the same time acknowledges there is a provincial interest and role in making certain that standards exist and are enforced across the province.

It is not the intent of the committee to add to this complexity by requiring or encouraging all municipalities to adopt official plans for the sake of regulating signs. The committee believes that municipalities which have an official plan and who wish to adopt a signage bylaw, should do so under the *Planning Act*. Municipalities without official plans should maintain the opportunity to adopt bylaws under the *Municipalities Act*. The committee believes that all legislation dealing with municipal signage bylaws should include the same requirements.

The recommendations that follow are intended to better position municipalities to manage signs within their boundaries and to ensure a level of consistency across the province.

Recommendations:

#29 The committee recommends that the enablement for and approval of any municipality to regulate signage be placed in legislation so that the following criteria will be met:

- the intent and role of signage in the municipality must be clearly articulated in the bylaw;
- a public consultation process must be made available;
- approval by the province must be required, which will include consideration of the municipalities' ability to administer and enforce the bylaws; and
- an affordable appeal mechanism must be available.

#30 The committee recommends that the provincial signage legislation and regulations apply in all municipalities in the province as follows:

- in the absence of municipal bylaws in any municipality, that the provincial regulations apply in their entirety;
- that where a municipality has a signage bylaw that bylaw shall replace provincial regulations and replace the requirement to obtain a provincial permit;
- municipal bylaws shall be:
    - in the case of cities and towns, no less stringent than the provincial regulations with respect to prohibiting mobile signs and off-premise billboards;
    - in the case of incorporated communities, no less stringent than the provincial regulations with respect to size, height, location, number of on-premise signs, the prohibition of mobile signs and off-premise billboards, and a sunset clause for non-conforming signs; and

- municipalities with existing bylaws shall bring their bylaws into conformity with provincial standards within a stated time period.

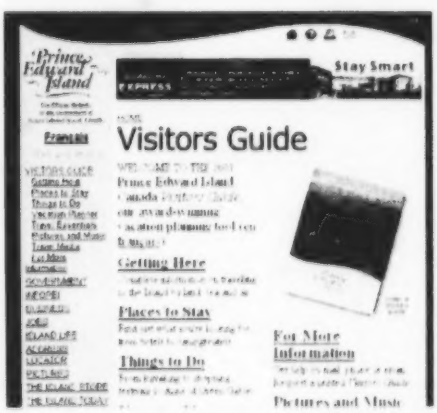
#31 The committee recommends that the Federation of PEI Municipalities, in conjunction with the province, develop a model signage bylaw and a "best practices" manual designed to assist municipalities to develop signage controls that meet their objectives, as well as those of the province, and which can be administered and enforced by the municipalities.

#32 The committee recommends that provisions be made to facilitate the efficient enforcement of municipal signage bylaws.

Integrated Directional Information

While each component of a signage system is important, what is most important is that it is a system — a case where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. One of the parts contributing to the whole is the complement of directional information provided to travellers. The province and individual operators currently provide an abundance of information to travellers through all available media: print, television, radio and Internet. They generally do a good job of helping people plan their vacations and providing them in advance with way-finding information. The *Visitors Guide* has a distribution of 380,000 copies, with 1,543 listings. This year, there were 100,000 copies of the French version, *Paradis sur Mer*, made available, with 311 listings. In addition, the Web site edition has 1,600 listings. The 1995 and 1996 Exit Surveys revealed that approximately 65 per cent of visitors either brought a guide with them, or obtained one when they arrived. (This information has not been gathered in more recent exit surveys.)

With new technology, businesses have more opportunity to advertise and provide directional information to their clients. Changes in information technology have changed how people do business and interact with clients. For example, PEI is currently offering a new experimental service through which individuals with a web-compatible digital cell phone can search visitor information. As well, maps plus information files can be downloaded to a personal digital assistant. It was suggested to the committee that, because of advances such as these, and others that will undoubtedly become available, the need for HISS is not the same as it was when it was introduced in the 1970s. They suggested that it could, and should, be scaled back to reflect the needs of this century. The committee concludes that while there are other options to distribute information that should be optimized, there is still a need for highway signs.



HISS was never intended as a stand-alone entity, but rather to coordinate with printed tourism material. However, this relationship has not been maintained. Tourism literature and directional signage do not complement each other. In fact, the two are often disjointed. Perhaps the best example of disjointed directional information has been the signing of the day-touring regions. While there has been some work done at the local level, these regions have not been signed by the province, even though they appear prominently on the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map* and in the *Visitors Guide*. This has caused a great deal of concern. While these touring routes are under review, the committee contends that there must be consistency between tourism literature and highway signage for whatever touring routes are in place in the future.

The committee believes it is necessary to get back to a system that coordinates the various components of information to tourists. Overall, signage should not be considered the only option to provide directional information to visitors in a way that levels the playing field. This coordination is essential for the system being recommended by the committee to work.

Recommendations:

#33 The committee recommends that all visitor information, printed and Internet material, be coordinated with the signage system, and specifically that:

- route numbers be consistently used in the descriptions provided for all destinations listed in the *Visitors Guide;*
- touring areas be consistently signed;
- symbols be consistently used; and
- the location of map-stops be clearly identified on the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.

#34 The committee recommends that private operators be encouraged to indicate their location by using route numbers and community names, providing clear direction and, where appropriate, by using maps in all of their advertising and information distribution, including Web sites.

#35 The committee recommends that visual information be provided at the main entry points to the province, Borden-Carleton and Wood Islands, which identifies the regions of the province and the locations of the map-stops.

Administration and Enforcement

Responsibility

The Highway Information Signage System is currently administered by Tourism PEI and the Department of Transportation and Public Works as follows:

- the *Highways Advertisements Act* and regulations are the responsibility of Tourism PEI;
- the *Roads Act* and the *Highway Traffic Act* are the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Public Works;
- Tourism PEI assesses applications and issues licences;
- Tourism PEI evaluates the requests and approves the orders for HISS signs, and collects and accounts for the fees;
- Transportation and Public Works makes the HISS signs and erects them along the road; and
- Tourism PEI communicates with municipalities over mutual concerns.

The committee believes that this arrangement of joint administration by Tourism PEI and the Department of Transportation and Public Works should continue, but notes that there is room for improvement, particularly in communications. The committee believes that this relationship will be enhanced by a clear policy and new legislation, which will allow both departments to be "reading from the same page." For example, it was noted that a number of signs are replaced each year for businesses that end up not operating. This and other problems could be averted, or at least reduced, with better communications.

Fees

Fees for signs are charged annually on the basis of the type of business and the seasonality of the operation, as illustrated below.

Establishment Category	*Fee Per Sign*	
	Seasonal (May 15-Oct.15)	*Year-round*
Hotel, motel, lodge, inn, resort, cottage, farm vacation home, tourist home, bed & breakfast:		
- 1 to 5 units	$20	$40
- 6 to 10 units	$40	$80
- 11 and up	$70	$140
Campground:		
- Unserviced campsites	$20	$40
- Under 25 hook-ups	$20	$40
- 25 to 50 hook-ups	$30	$60
- 51 and over hook-ups	$70	$140
Attraction or Recreation	$70	$140
Craft/Gift Shop	$30	$60
Eating Establishment:		
- Seating Capacity up to 50	$30	$60
- Seating Capacity 51 and over	$70	$140
Goods and Services	$70	$140

The fee schedule for the HISS program was designed to be cost recovery when first instituted. However, fees have not changed for more than a decade. Total revenue from fees collected was $115,000 in 2000–2001. The total estimated cost for the signs is $253,000 annually, taking into consideration materials, manufacture, erection and administration. Based upon an average five-year life span of each sign and the material currently being used, the true cost of a sign under the present program averages out to $80 on an annual basis.

The practice of basing the fees on the type, and in some cases size, of the business, has been a source of dissatisfaction. A five-unit inn would be charged $20 where an attraction regardless of size would be charged $70 for the same sign. The discrepancies are even greater for businesses that are not seasonal.

Seasonal businesses are charged half the fee that is charged for businesses operating a full year, although the signs are in place all year. Given that the cost of production and maintenance is not dependent on the nature of the business or the seasonality, the result is that cross-subsidization is occurring.

Clarity

Those responsible for administration contend that the lack of clarity is the largest issue affecting administration of the programs. Inconsistencies in the act and regulations, no legal basis for the HISS policy, and frequent requests for exceptions make enforcement difficult. It is commendable that within this framework the province has been able to achieve a significant amount of compliance and cooperation.

Enforcement

Uniform and competent enforcement is key to public acceptance of any public policy. Tourism PEI has been advised that given the state of the current legislation, enforcement would be difficult. While any program can expect to have anomalies requiring interpretation, the number of these occurring on a weekly or even daily basis has become unworkable. People are discouraged from adhering to the regulations, seeing the number of exceptions that are made and non-conforming signs that go up without repercussions. Government itself has a number of signs that are outside the current policy. This is an issue that is not only highly sensitive, but very visible. Islanders notice when there are inequities in the application of the program. Many such inequities were brought to the attention of the committee. The committee believes that in order to protect the integrity of the system and ensure that there is a level playing field, it dictates that there be one set of rules. This means that the legislation should not provide for unspecified exemptions, special permits or ministerial discretion to make allowances outside the legislation. The program must not only be fair and just, but it must appear to be so. While Tourism PEI's efforts at negotiation are to be commended, and should be continued, enforcement efforts need to be increased. Backed by strengthened legislation and increased awareness of the rules, enforcement would be enhanced.

The committee believes that the changes recommended are significant enough to warrant new legislation. New legislation that is clear and that addresses the recommendations put forward in this report should leave no room for discretion or unspecified exemption. Additionally, given that the committee members have already concluded that ministerial discretion in the application of the regulations should be removed, they further conclude that there is no need for an ongoing advisory or appeals committee.

Implementation

These changes will take time and should be implemented over a planned schedule which is sensitive to the needs of travellers and operators.

Public consultations were a key component of this exercise and were invaluable in identifying the issues and developing recommendations. Communication with and education of stakeholders — sign-makers, business operators and municipalities — will continue to be an important component of introducing a new system. This will require an aggressive communication and education campaign.

Most notably, implementation will require the dedication of the appropriate financial and personnel resources to bring the proposed system into place.

Recommendations:

#36 The committee recommends that an implementation schedule be developed that:

- provides communication with and education of stakeholders;
- sees the immediate removal of any provincial government signs outside the intent of the new legislation;
- includes a sunset clause schedule, giving a stated time in which signs not conforming with the new legislation are to be removed;
- replaces HISS signs by region over a three-year period; and
- brings municipal bylaws into conformity with provincial legislation.

#37 The committee recommends that new legislation be developed, promoted and administered by Tourism PEI, which addresses the inconsistences, improves the administration, and strengthens the enforcement capabilities, and which does not include any provisions for exemptions or discretions. Further, there should be no appeals provision under the new legislation (recognizing that municipal signage decisions under the *Planning Act* would be appealable to the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission).

#38 The committee recommends that Tourism PEI develop a plain-language manual, outlining the new legislation and regulations, emphasizing what signage is permitted and what requirements are in place, and promoting some best practices. This manual should be readily available on the provincial Web site, from Access PEI centres and from Tourism PEI.

#39 The committee recommends that a new fee schedule for the directional signage program be adopted that:

- is based on cost-recovery (cost of the sign, installation, administration and maintenance based on the average life span of the signs) averaged over the anticipated life span of a sign, based on the overall program;
- does not include the land or parking area in a map-stop;
- is not based on the size of the operation;
- does not differentiate between seasonal businesses and year-round businesses; and
- includes an administration fee, of not more than $10, for new on-premise signs, sign alterations and private message boards.

#40 The committee recommends that in order to keep administration seamless for the operators, the present billing arrangement be continued, whereby invoices are sent out in a package with other invoices to operators from Tourism PEI.

#41 The committee recommends that the appropriate financial and personnel resources be identified and dedicated for the timely implementation of this report.

#42 The committee recommends that a ministerial review of the policy and program be conducted in five years to evaluate if they are meeting the defined principles and recommend any necessary amendments to reflect the current environment.

Conclusion

The committee began this exercise with some appreciation of the challenge of its task. The committee also began with a belief that it could make a difference. The committee concludes the exercise with the realization that the task was even more challenging than had originally been anticipated. As a result, the scope of the strategies put forward has been determined by the scope of the issues raised.

The province took a tough stand in banning off-premise advertising and regulating all signs within view of the public highway — a stand that has made significant strides in protecting the Island landscape, promoting public safety and at the same time providing a functional directional information system. While not unanimous, the consultations revealed a significant level of support for this effort. The committee believes that the strategies recommended preserve the basic premise of the existing system, address the critical issues identified throughout this exercise, and that they will make a difference. The committee is cognizant that these recommendations will not end the sign debate on PEI. To do so would require a system that is all things to all people — which in the end would serve no one. The proposed system attempts to take the future into consideration and allows for growth. The committee believes these recommendations, backed by the appropriate commitment of financial and personnel resources, will achieve the right balance and provide a benefit to all Islanders and visitors. The committee also believes that this approach meets the objectives and guiding principles, reflects the objectives and values of most Islanders, and constitutes a system that will serve the Island into the future.

Recommendation:

#43 The committee recommends that the Government adopt the recommendations of this committee and that the Minister of Tourism move forward with its timely implementation.

Appendix 'A'

Recommendations

#1 The committee recommends that the objective of a signage policy should be to protect the landscape, promote safety and provide an effective way-finding system.

#2 The committee recommends that the following guiding principles be adopted and, along with the objective, form the basis of a new signage policy:

- given that the unique landscape of the province is of intrinsic importance to Islanders and is a fundamental component of the province's appeal as a tourist destination, the roadways and land visible from roadways are not an appropriate place for advertising and signage should result in no net loss of landscape quality;
- in the absence of roadside advertising, there must be an effective off-premise directional signage program which is part of a systematic approach to provide adequate way-finding information;
- the signage system must place public safety as a priority;
- the needs of the travelling public must be met;
- a level playing field for operators must be created and maintained;
- the system must require only change that is necessary and sufficient to address critical issues and meet the objective;
- the signage system must achieve an adequate balance between signage and protecting the landscape quality; and
- implementation and operation of the system must be manageable, affordable and allow for growth.

#3 The committee recommends that the objective of the signage policy be entrenched in legislation.

#4 The committee recommends that the policy and legislation clearly define what constitutes a sign. That definition should be as detailed and comprehensive as possible and include any visual communication device or means being used as a sign. It should include traditional signs, as well as flags, vehicles and other devices being used as a sign.

#5 The committee recommends that supplementary directional signs indicating North, South, East and West be placed on route signs along arterial and collector highways, and along those local roads that are heavily travelled.

#6 The committee recommends that additional confirmation distance signs be put in place.

#7 The committee recommends that route numbers be added to existing overhead guide signs.

#8 The committee recommends that a second route assembly sign, placed immediately before the intersection, be put in place where an arterial and a collector highway intersect.

#9 The committee recommends that diagrammatic directional boards be placed at all intersections that may cause confusion, such as Read's Corner and Kensington.

#10 The committee recommends that route signs and guide signs be constructed with materials having reflective properties.

#11 The committee recommends that place names on guide signs be consistent with the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.

#12 The committee recommends that communities be encouraged to develop their community name signs subject to size and location requirements established by the Province, but without Provincial regulation of design, material or maintenance. The government-supplied community name signs should be removed where a municipally supplied name sign is visible at the boundary. Guidelines for community name signs should be established to provide assistance to municipalities in developing their own signs.

#13 The committee recommends that any designated touring region be adequately signed in a manner consistent with printed material provided by the Province.

#14 The committee recommends that on-premise signs be subject to the following limits, regardless of the number of businesses located on the property:

- a maximum of one free-standing sign per parcel, except where a business is located on a corner or meets other special circumstances as defined in regulation, two signs shall be the maximum;
- one on-premise sandwich board sign, as long as it is not a safety hazard, is located on the premise, not the right-of-way, and fits within defined size requirements; and
- limit facia signs to a per centage of the area of the building wall, but not regulate the number of facia signs.

#15 The committee recommends that regulations relating to on-premise signs include:

- existing size, height and setback regulations;
- specific criteria for determining size and height; and
- size and height standards for roof signs and projecting signs (that do not project beyond the height of the roof).

#16 The committee recommends that the province consistently use a permit system for on-premise signs, charge a fee set out in regulation designed to cover the administrative costs, and use a licence sticker adhered to the sign.

#17 The committee recommends that there are certain types of signs that should be allowed without a permit, provided they do not exceed an established maximum size requirement and, where applicable, that they are removed within the appropriate time frames, such as the following:

- signs which are necessary for public safety and welfare;
- signs relating to federal, provincial, municipal or regional school board elections;
- notices authorized to be posted pursuant to any enactment or order of a court;
- no trespassing signs;
- signs which are incidental to construction, while construction is in progress;
- name and address of resident;
- floral and landscaping arrangements;
- directional signs indicating parking or street entrances and exits;
- signs designed to give directions or identify features to patrons within the property;
- window signs which are not internally lit;
- identification signs for entrance to a residential neighbourhood;
- flags or pennants of a municipal, provincial or federal government; and
- yard sale signs.

#18 The committee recommends that mobile signs, including mobile signs that have been altered, be prohibited.

#19 The committee recommends that real estate companies be required to obtain an annual sign permit. Signs will be subject to size, placement and removal requirements set under legislation.

#20 The committee recommends that private off-premise signs continue to be prohibited and that a new Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program made up of off-premise directional roadside signs and map-stop areas (kiosks), be developed to replace the current HISS program.

#21 The committee recommends that Tourism PEI and the Department of Transportation and Public Works establish a series of map-stop sites in areas of high demand for signs, considering the following criteria for determining the location of a map-stop:

- consistency with the objectives and guiding principles of the policy;
- level of demand for signs in the area;
- relationship to the major decision-point concept;
- safety of access to the site;
- room for access and parking;
- proximity to the main road;
- availability of other services and scenic viewing areas; and
- possibility to locate at a Visitor Information Centre, provincial park or municipal land.

This would involve working with the communities and local tourist operators identifying the site, developing a maintenance plan, and identifying features of the community that would be included on the map-stop (cultural information, facilities such as parks, board-walks and churches).

#22 The committee recommends that eligible businesses under the Visitor Information and Directional Signage Program be limited to:

- attractions including museums, art galleries, historic sites, theme/amusement parks, cultural attractions, natural phenomena, recreation facilities, guided tours, genealogical and historical sites, and animal/plant attractions;
- artisan/craft demonstrations and shops;
- commercial accommodations such as resorts, hotels/motels, country inns, bed and breakfasts, and campgrounds;
- restaurants; and
- antique shops.

Furthermore, specific exclusions from eligibility be listed, including:

- private "for members only" clubs and organizations; and
- businesses without the required licence.

#23 The committee recommends that the content of roadside signs or listings in a map-stop under the new program:

- include only the name of the business;
- not include advertising of products or features;
- not include the number of units, facilities available or other descriptive words that are not part of the name;
- not include operating dates; and
- be listed in English, French or both, staying within the allowable number of characters.

#24 The committee recommends that roadside signs:

- consist of up to 28 characters without symbol (14 characters per line) or 20 characters with symbol (10 characters per line) including spaces;
- include an arrow and distance on the left, and symbols when used, on the right; and
- be placed on the approach to an intersection with those requiring a left turn first, followed by those requiring a right turn.

#25 The committee recommends that an operation that has received accreditation from a recognized organization as being partially or fully accessible may, at their request, include the appropriate symbol on their roadside sign or map-stop listing. Use of this symbol on the roadside sign would reduce the allowable characters available for the sign message by two.

#26 The committee recommends that Tourism PEI, in consultation with industry, determine the symbols that should be used as part of the roadside sign for services and operations which do not have a symbol assigned in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada*. Tourism PEI should take into consideration symbols used in other jurisdictions and the symbols used in the *Visitors Guide* and *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.

#27 The committee recommends that generic stand-alone symbols be used for the following:

- emergency and transportation services as defined in *the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* (hospital, police, phone, airports, parking and ferry);

- only the following traveller services as defined in the *Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Canada* (picnic, viewpoint, boat launch and information); and
- trails, and national, provincial and municipal parks.

#28 The committee recommends that a permit, obtained by the owner of the property, be required for all temporary and permanent signs, including special events and promotion of causes, with restrictions in place regarding the size, number of signs, setback and length of time.

#29 The committee recommends that the enablement for and approval of any municipality to regulate signage be placed in legislation so that the following criteria will be met:
- the intent and role of signage in the municipality must be clearly articulated in the bylaw;
- a public consultation process must be made available;
- approval by the province must be required, which will include consideration of the municipalities' ability to administer and enforce the bylaws; and
- an affordable appeal mechanism must be available.

#30 The committee recommends that the provincial signage legislation and regulations apply in all municipalities in the province as follows:
- in the absence of municipal bylaws in any municipality, that the provincial regulations apply in their entirety;
- that where a municipality has a signage bylaw that bylaw shall replace provincial regulations and replace the requirement to obtain a provincial permit;
- municipal bylaws shall be:
  - in the case of cities and towns, no less stringent than the provincial regulations with respect to prohibiting mobile signs and off-premise billboards;
  - in the case of incorporated communities, no less stringent than the provincial regulations with respect to size, height, location, number of on-premise signs, the prohibition of mobile signs and off-premise billboards, and a sunset clause for non-conforming signs; and
- requiring municipalities with existing bylaws shall bring their bylaws into conformity with provincial standards within a stated time period.

#31 The committee recommends that the Federation of PEI Municipalities, in conjunction with the province, develop a model signage bylaw and a "best practices" manual designed to assist municipalities to develop signage controls that meet their objectives, as well as those of the province, and which can be administered and enforced by the municipalities.

#32 The committee recommends that provisions be made to facilitate the efficient enforcement of municipal signage bylaws.

#33 The committee recommends that all visitor information, printed and internet material, be coordinated with the signage system, and specifically that:
- route numbers be consistently used in the descriptions provided for all destinations listed in the *Visitors Guide*;

- touring areas be consistently signed;
- symbols be consistently used; and
- the location of map-stops be clearly identified on the *Prince Edward Island Highway Map*.

#34 The committee recommends that private operators be encouraged to indicate their location by using route numbers and community names, providing clear direction and, where appropriate, by using maps in all of their advertising and information distribution, including Web sites.

#35 The committee recommends that visual information be provided at the main entry points to the Province, Borden-Carleton and Wood Islands, which identifies the regions of the province and the locations of the map-stops.

#36 The committee recommends that an implementation schedule be developed that:

- provides communication with and education of stakeholders;
- sees the immediate removal of any provincial government signs outside the intent of the new legislation;
- includes a sunset clause schedule, giving a stated time in which signs not conforming with the new legislation are to be removed;
- replaces HISS signs by region over a three-year period; and
- brings municipal bylaws into conformity with provincial legislation.

#37 The committee recommends that new legislation be developed, promoted and administered by Tourism PEI, which addresses the inconsistences, improves the administration, and strengthens the enforcement capabilities, and which does not include any provisions for exemptions or discretions. Further, there should be no appeals provision under the new legislation (recognizing that municipal signage decisions under the *Planning Act* would be appealable to the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission).

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#40 The committee recommends that in order to keep administration seamless for the operators, the present billing arrangement be continued, whereby invoices are sent out in a package with other invoices to operators from Tourism PEI.

#41 The committee recommends that the appropriate financial and personnel resources be identified and dedicated for the timely implementation of this report.

#42 The committee recommends that a ministerial review of the policy and program be conducted in five years to evaluate if they are meeting the defined principles and recommend any necessary amendments to reflect the current environment.

#43 The committee recommends that the Government adopt the recommendations of this committee and that the Minister of Tourism move forward with its timely implementation.

Appendix 'B'

Submissions and Presentations

The following individuals and groups provided input to the Review Committee:

3M Canada
Architects Association of Prince Edward Island
Association of Tourism Operators (ATO)
Atlantic Planners Institute, PEI Branch
Beacon A United Sign Company
Belfast Community Council
Bourne, Bart, Action Attractions Ltd., Mentor Marketing
Campbell, Kumari, Owner, The Carousel
Canadian Federation of Independent Business
Chace, Robin, General Manager, Encounter Creek
City of Charlottetown Planning Department
Clements, Gilbert R.
Community of St. Nicholas
Construction Association of Prince Edward Island
Delaney, Jeanie
Eastern Kings Tourism Action Committee
Federated Women's Institute of PEI
Federation of Prince Edward Island Municipalities
Golf PEI
Greater Summerside Chamber of Commerce
Holman, Alan H., O.C.
Island Plastics Inc.
Kohler, Michael, FRAIC MMAAPEI
MacDonald, Annie Lee
Matheson, George, The Rodd Marine Inn and Suites
Mellish, Peter, (Starlite Diner)
Newcombe, Paul H. P.Eng. (Co-operator of Reddin House B&B).
Nolan, Heather A.
P. Wood & Associates (Shining Waters-Ingleside Resort)
PEI Sports Hall of Fame and Museum Inc.
Pattison Outdoor
Prince Edward Island Council of the Disabled, Barry Schmidl
Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture
Prince Edward Island Seniors Advisory Council
Rodgerson, Maurice, Keppoch Road, Stratford
Rossignol Estate Winery Ltd.
Stratford and Area Business Association
Tourism Industry Association of Prince Edward Island
Town of Alberton
Town of Cornwall
Town of Souris
Town of Stratford
Wyand, Walter, (Anne Shirley Hotel)

Appendix 'C'

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